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AND ITS AUTHOR

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THE VITA NUOVA AND ITS AUTHOR

BEING THE VITA NUOVA OF DANTE ALIGHIERI, LITERALLY TRANSLATED, WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY

CHARLES STUART BOSWELL

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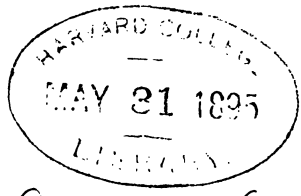

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THE VITA NUOVA AND ITS AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION.

DANTE'S fame, like that of most writers who have left behind them some one work of transcendent excellence, is so inseparably connected, in the minds of men generally, with that work, that his minor writings are seldom permitted to have their due weight in the estimate either of his works or of his personality. That this should be so is, perhaps, inevitable: life is too short, and, for most, too busy, to admit of an exhaustive study of the whole life-work of even the greatest men. None the less, however, is it true that by remaining in ignorance of an author's minor writings, we not only lose much that is of intrinsic worth, but we also, and especially, forego some of our most valuable aids to the

full comprehension and due appreciation both of his personality and of his greater works.

Of none is this more true than it is of Dante. To none, not even, perhaps, to Shakspere, may the epithet "myriad-minded" be applied with greater fitness; in no one man's work are represented with greater completeness all, or nearly all, man's mental capacities and the various aspects of human nature, or are more completely mirrored the characteristics of the times in which he lived. All these elements, it is true, are to be found in the *Commedia*—and there most highly developed—by such as have eyes to see what is before them. Dante, however, has suffered from the very greatness of his fame, which, subsisting through the ages immediately preceding our own, has been handed down to us by critics unable, indeed, to ignore, but incapable of appreciating, his genius; and these critics have decided the judgment of the generality of readers, who are prone to turn most eagerly to those passages of a book which are most deeply thumb-marked by their predecessors, and to form their opinions upon the marginal notes which they find pencilled there.

For a century past, sounder literary appreciations have prevailed, and a vast amount of

learning and industry has been devoted to the elucidation of Dante's life and works; even now, however, it is by no means rare to find many who should know better speaking and writing of Dante's *harshness*, his *sternness*, his *cruelty*, his *partiality*, his *vindictiveness*, his *love of the horrible*, and what not; their knowledge of the poet being confined apparently to certain passages of the *Inferno* descriptive of the torments of the damned, and of the crimes by which those penalties were incurred; while, even in those very passages, the tragedy, the pathos, and the moral significance are ignored, and only the horrors are dwelt upon. Truly these critics would seem to enter upon the perusal of one of the world's greatest poems in much the same spirit as that in which readers of another class take up the "Police News"—in search of *un nouveau frisson*.

A far other and juster estimate of the divine poem and its author might be formed by a study of his minor works, in each of which is developed some special side of his character, some special set of his convictions expounded; while those who already love and appreciate the great work, will find in them much that will enable them to return to its perusal with a

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constitutes true nobility. In his treatise *De Monarchia* Dante expounds and elaborates his ideal system of an universal Polity, attempting the solution of the burning question which racked all Christendom during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries—the relative preponderance of the civil and ecclesiastical power. The fragment *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is at once an interesting critique upon the modern romance tongues, and the vernacular poetry of his own day, and an inception of his own theory of poetics. In short, Dante's life-work forms one great whole, of which the individual parts, though treating of topics the most widely diverse, and betraying those changes and inconsistencies which are the necessary outcome of ripening powers and extended knowledge, are yet linked each to each by innumerable traits of thought, imagery and expression, testifying to the marvellous unity of the mind which gave them birth.

Of Dante's minor works, the most germane to our present purpose—the study, that is, of Dante's own personality—as well as the one most conspicuous for its own inherent beauty, is without doubt the *Vita Nuova*, the story of the poet's early love. The claims of this little

sion of a most beautiful mind; the most fair blossom of that tree which was destined in its autumn to bear such goodly fruit.

Such being the *Vita Nuova*, it is needless to state that it has several times been translated into English, and that, more than once, with an excellence to which the present translation can make no pretension. Doubtless, therefore, my present task will appear superfluous to many; nevertheless, I venture to think that there is still room for an edition prepared upon the plan which I have followed. The translation of a work like the present will be carried out on a different system, according to the design which the translator has in view. This design may be either Æsthetic, or Historic, or Biographical. In the first case, the translator will set himself to reproduce the beauties of the original in his own tongue, so far as his own skill and the restrictions imposed upon him by an alien idiom will permit. For this purpose, he must reproduce, not so much the exact words of the original, as the impression which those words are intended to convey; he must study not so much the accuracy of detail, as the accuracy of the total effect; and to this end the sacrifice of strict verbal accuracy is often needful. The

translator of the second class has the simplest task of all before him. He has but to furnish such a correct and readable version of his author as shall enable those of an alien tongue to acquaint themselves with the facts, the opinions, or other the subject matter, of the original, and is free, where he can do so without deviating from the sense of a passage, to render the author's idiom by some corresponding idiom of his own language. A translation of the third class, though making less demands upon the native talents of the translator than one of the first class, is perhaps beset with greater mechanical difficulties than either of the others, while the results obtained are likely to prove less grateful. His object is to render as fully as possible all that throws any light upon the personality of his author, and to this end he must reproduce, so far as differences of idiom will permit, all those turns of thought and language in which so much of personality finds expression. To this last design, I have, in the present translation, endeavoured to conform, and preferring, where the choice appears inevitable, baldness to licence, have aimed at an even slavish literalness, extending, in some cases, even to the order in which the words of the original occur. By this

course, much of the author's charm is necessarily sacrificed, and the translation must needs forfeit all claims to style by so close an adherence to the forms proper to a foreign language, and to the peculiar characteristics of another man's mind. This is especially the case with such a writer as Dante, and although the *Vita Nuova* is comparatively free from those difficulties with which an excessive tendency to concentration and allusion fill the *Commedia*, it none the less bears throughout the impress of Dante's peculiarly individual style, which, when translated from his own into another tongue, runs the risk of falling into an idiom foreign to both. In spite, however, of these great drawbacks, and although I cannot hope to have attained, in all cases, to that perfect accuracy which has been my aim, it yet seems probable that the operations of the author's mind may be traced more distinctly in a translation carried out upon these lines, than in one which deviates more widely from the words which are the immediate expression of this mental process.

So much being premised, it may be well, for the better understanding of the work before us, to give some slight sketch of the author's life, down to the time of its composition, and at the

same time to attempt an estimate of the social and literary conditions among which he grew up. And here it must be confessed that few indeed are the events of Dante's life which are admitted without dispute; hardly one but has given rise to a mass of controversy, sometimes greater in bulk than the whole of Dante's own writings. Into matters of controversy neither our present purpose nor the space at our disposal will permit me to enter. Such must be reserved for a further and more ambitious work, should I ever succeed in bringing it to completion. Here it must suffice to record such few facts of Dante's early life as are most generally admitted, and to give such details of the forces brought to bear upon his development as may enable the reader, in some degree, to fill up the meagre outline.

Dante's family, the Alighieri, was, according to the universal testimony of the poet's earliest biographers, an ancient and noble house of Florence. Much doubt has been expressed by some of the most eminent modern commentators with regard to this alleged nobility, although, as I venture to think, none of the arguments adduced to the contrary suffice to outweigh the ancient tradition, founded, as it is, upon the belief which generally prevailed in Florence

immediately after the poet's death, at a time when nobility of birth was highly valued, and its evidences carefully recorded. The only positive evidence we have is that of Dante himself, who in Books XV. and XVI. of the *Paradiso* holds converse with his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida, born probably 1090-1, and made a knight of the Empire by the Emperor Conrad III., whom he accompanied in his crusade of 1147, and died there. Tradition goes on to state that Cacciaguida was a scion of the Florentine house of the Elisei, and upon marrying Alighiera degl' Aldighieri, an heiress of a noble family of the Val di Pado (at Ferrara, according to most, at Parma or Verona, according to others), founded a new house, bearing his wife's family name, corrupted to Alighieri (spelled also Allighieri, Aldighieri and otherwise).[1] Tradition ascribed an ancient and

[1] So *Paradiso* XV. (Cary's translation) :—

From Valdipado came to me my spouse,
And thence thy surname grew. I followed then
The Emperor Conrad ; and his knighthood he
Did gird on me ; in such good part he took
My valiant service. After that I went
With him, to testify against that evil law,
Whose people, by the shepherd's fault, possess
Your right, usurping. There, by that foul crew,
Was I released from the deceitful world, etc.

illustrious origin to the Elisei. Their founder was said to be one Eliseo or Eliseus, of the great Roman house of the Frangipani, one of the seven companions of Hubertus Cæsar sent by Julius Cæsar to rebuild Florence, which had been destroyed in the civil wars. As, however, Hubertus Cæsar never existed, nor did Julius Cæsar send him or anyone else to rebuild Florence, this part of the story is obviously mythical. So, probably, is the account of one of the Elisei having been knighted by Charlemagne, and set by him to superintend the rebuilding, or, rather, the extension of Florence. However, the unauthenticity of the early history of the Elisei does not suffice to discredit the received tradition that the Alighieri sprang from them. The separate existence of the latter had subsisted, at the time of Dante's death, for about two centuries only, and the authentic history of the family might well be known to many of those with whom the early commentators were acquainted.

The Alighieri, differing herein from the Elisei, were Guelfs, and, as such, twice suffered banishment upon the accession to power of the Ghibellines (*Inferno*, X.). However, whether nobles or *popolani*, they do not seem to have

been a distinguished, though a well-to-do and respected family, and their names do not appear in the lists of the principal houses adhering to one or other of the rival factions.

Dante's father, Alighiero Alighieri, is said by some to have been a jurisconsult or notary of some eminence; professions then of much dignity and esteem in the Italian states, and often followed by the higher nobility. He was twice married: to Lapa di Chiarissimo Cialuffi, a *popolana*, i.e. a member of a non-noble family, and to Monna Bella, said to be the daughter of Durante di Messer Scolaio degl' Abati. The latter was Dante's mother, though it is uncertain whether she was Alighiero's second wife, or his first, dying in Dante's infancy.

Dante was born in the latter part of May, or the beginning of June—probably the former—1265, and was baptized in the Baptistery, or Church of S. Giovanni,[1] by the name of Durante, shortened, after the familiar usage of Florence, into Dante, just as Beatrice was

[1] Paradise XXV. It was here that all the children of Florence were baptized. A rude kind of census was kept by depositing in an urn for every boy a black bean, and for each girl a white.

shortened into Bice. Of Dante's home life we know absolutely nothing. The only recorded event of his childhood is his first meeting with Beatrice, the daughter, according to the account generally received, of Folco Portinari, one of the wealthiest and most honoured citizens of Florence, and Giulia Caponsacchi his wife.[1]

Of the circumstances attending this first meeting, Dante has himself told us something in the second chapter of the *Vita Nuova*. This account has been much amplified by Boccaccio; but though the added details are purely the growth of the novelist's own tropic fancy,[2] yet is his narative so charming in itself,

[1] The identity of the poet's early love with Beatrice Portinari has lately been impugned by Dr. G. A. Scartazzini with all his accustomed force of argument; but as I venture to think that his arguments, though powerful, are not altogether conclusive, and as it is my object to avoid controversy in this place, I merely set down the hitherto accepted tradition, to which the poet's earliest biographers and commentators — Leonardo Bruni, Boccaccio, L'Ottimo, Gianozzo Manetti, Filippo Villani, Benvenuto da Imola, and others have given the support of their testimony.

[2] Boccaccio had been acquainted with Dante's son Pietro, with the confidential attendant of his later years, Piero di Messer Giordino da Ravenna, and with other of the poet's friends, so that it is just possible that some,

so illustrative of the Florentine society of the day, and so fully in accordance with the circumstances as they might have been, and probably were, that it will be but a venial sin against brevity to set it out at length.

"At that season," then, begins the Decameronist, "at that season when the mildness of the heavens again clothes the earth in her fair array, and sets her all smiling with the variety of flowers intermingled with the green leaves, it was the usage in our city, alike of men and women, to keep festival at their country houses, each in distinct companies." To one of these May festivals, held in the Portinari Gardens,[1] Alighiero, it is said, went as an invited guest, taking with him the little Dante, then on the verge of nine years old. "Among the crowd of young people there was a daughter of the afore-

at any rate, of the picturesque details with which the novelist has embellished his panegyric upon the master, were derived from stray reminiscences imparted by the latter in moments of expansion, and treasured up by the auditors.

[1] The home of the Alighieri was in the Quarter of the Porta S. Piero, or the "Quarter of Scandal," inhabited by the *Arte*, or Guild, of the *Medici e Speziali*, in the centre of the city, near the Mercato Vecchio. Their house closely adjoined those of the Portinari, and of Dante's friends, and subsequent foes, the Donati.

said Folco, whose name was Bice (as he always called her, from her original name which was Beatrice), whose age was perhaps about eight years; very charming and beautiful in her childish way, and in her actions gentle and right pleasing, with manners and speech somewhat more grave and modest than her early years required; and besides this, the features of her face were exceeding delicate, and excellently disposed, and full, besides her beauty, of a winsomeness so noble that she was esteemed by many as well nigh a little angel. She, then, being such as I describe her, or, perchance, even more beautiful, made her appearance at this festival, not, as I deem, for the first time, but now first with the power to enamour the eyes of our Dante; who, all boy as he was, received her fair image into his heart, with so great affection that from this day forth it never departed thence, so long as he lived."

Nothing is recorded of the nine years immediately following Dante's first meeting with Beatrice, save that we learn from the same second chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, that the impression made by her apparition upon his childish fancy was not at once obliterated, but that he would seek opportunities of looking upon her, and that

her image in his heart was even then a talisman, or Socratic dæmon, ruling all his conduct, and forbidding all such things as were not sanctioned by right reason. All else that befell during these nine years is a blank, which even tradition has barely attempted to fill up.

Dante's father died while he was still very young; the precise year is uncertain, but probably about 1274-5. The care of Dante's education thus devolved upon his mother, or, perhaps, his stepmother, Monna Lapa. We have no means of knowing how she discharged her trust. Leonardo Bruni, indeed, tells us that, "in his boyhood, being liberally brought up, and entrusted to the masters of letters,[1] there straight-

[1] It is commonly reported that one of Dante's masters was Brunetto Latini, the foremost scholar of his day, of whose *Tesoretto* Dante apparently made some use in the *Commedia.* It appears doubtful, however, whether there be any further foundation for this report than that passage in the *Inferno*, Bk. XV., where Dante addresses him as his teacher and his guide in the way by which man makes himself immortal. The language implies a personal intercourse, but it does not follow that such instruction was imparted by Brunetto to Dante in the capacity of a pædagogue. This supposition, indeed, is rendered the less probable by the fact that Brunetto, besides being a scholar of such eminence, was also an active politician, and Secretary to the Republic of Florence.

way showed itself a very great genius, and most apt for excellent things. . . . He devoted himself not to literature only, but to the other liberal studies, passing by nothing which goes to render a man excelling. Nor, for all this, did he shut himself up in sloth, nor sever himself from the world; but, living and conversing with the other youths of his own age, he was found well versed and expert, and courageous in every youthful exercise." Again—"and it was a thing worthy of note that, though studying continually, it would not have seemed to any person that he did study, from his cheerful habit, and his youthful conversation."

All this is at once probable enough in itself, and in accordance with other and earlier accounts of Dante's social and personal qualities, derived, not improbably, from persons who had known him. Boccaccio, after his wont, is much more explicit, and, enumerating all the acquirements which he deems appropriate to his ideal of the man of culture, represents them as entering into his hero's curriculum.

"From the beginning of his boyhood," he says, "after having already learnt the first elements of letters, he did not, after the fashions of the nobles of our own day, give himself up

to childish wantonness and idlesse, waxing in slothfulness in his mother's lap, but, in his native land, he devoted his boyhood with continual study to the liberal arts, and in these became marvellously expert. And, as his mind and genius grew together with his years, he did not addict himself to the quest of gain, after which everyone, for the most part, runs nowadays, but to the laudable pursuit of eternal fame, etc."

Then follows a formidable list of Dante's acquirements, comprising an intimate acquaintance with the poets—and among them Virgil, Ovid, Horace and Statius—and the utmost skill in the imitation of them; together with a thorough knowledge of history and of philosophy, natural and moral. "And, taken with the sweetness of knowing the truth concerning the recondite things of heaven, nor finding aught in his life dearer than the same, wholly forsaking all other temporal cares, he devoted himself altogether to this alone. And, to the intent that no part of philosophy might remain unreviewed of him, he betook himself, with penetrating intellect, to the profoundest depths of theology; nor was the result wide of his intention; for, caring not for heat, nor cold,

nor vigils, nor fasting, nor any other bodily discomfort, he penetrated with assiduous zeal to the knowledge of all that pertains to the divine essence, and the other separate intelligences, which can be understood concerning them by the human intellect."

That Dante actually did, in the course of his life, master all these branches of learning, or even more, so far as was possible at his epoch, is certain; but that, as Boccaccio himself admits, these "diverse sciences were acquired at diverse ages," and that, consequently, this highly coloured picture is no faithful portraiture of the studies of his boyhood, or early manhood even, is equally certain. Indeed, we learn from Dante's own declaration that it was not until he had completed his twenty-sixth year that he became acquainted with Boethius *De Consolatione* and Cicero *De Amicitia*, although these were two of the most widely read books at that day among the learned. Moreover, he confesses that the Latinity of these two books, surely not hard specimens of the language, then offered many difficulties to him—proof positive that his was not a learned or scholastic education. Nevertheless, it does not follow that his education had been neglected, or that he grew up an unlettered

youth, lacking in culture and general information. Indeed, the *Vita Nuova* itself, if, as I think most probable, it was written soon after the time when Dante first began to addict himself to the severer studies, furnishes irrefragable proofs to the contrary.

Since, then, we are unable to ascertain what course the poet's education followed, all we can do is to form some general notion of the influences, literary and otherwise, among which his nature expanded, by briefly passing in review the means at his disposal, together with his political and social environment.

Latin, of course, was still the great vehicle of learning, the most important branches of instruction being comprised in the Trivium and Quadrivium, making together the seven liberal sciences, namely:—Grammar (including the rudiments of literature generally), dialectics, and rhetoric; arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. That Dante, in his youth, could have penetrated very deeply into these studies is negatived by his ignorance of the two Latin authors just referred to, whose works formed a principal study in the course, of which, indeed, Boethius was the founder. However, it is quite possible that Dante was instructed in the rudi-

ments of those studies which constituted the orthodox education of his day, even though he may not have progressed so far as to make acquaintance with the great authors at first hand. There was, besides, outside the strictly scholastic system, other literary *pabulum*, abundant in quantity, if sometimes rather deficient in quality. Instructive treatises abounded, of encyclopædic character, mainly compiled from the ancients, and treating *de omnibus rebus, et quibusdam aliis*:—History and geography, physics and metaphysics, mythology and demonology, astronomy—chiefly in the form of astrology,—natural history—most unnatural,—and medicine, admirably conducive to the health of the community by its fitness for relieving it of its sickly members. Of course, there was no lack of moral and theological works, these usually consisting of sentences or aphorisms taken from the writings of the fathers and schoolmen. There were, besides, books somewhat more literary in form, and, though rude and inartistic, of a more stimulating nature than the foregoing. Such were the lives and works of saints and martyrs; histories and biographies of Greece and Rome, drawn, for the most part,—by several stages perhaps,—from Plutarch and the historians of

the later Empire; monkish chronicles, too, of modern times, and the gestes of warriors and paladins, together with the accounts of modern travel and exploration.

That age, moreover, was one of awakening activity in several departments of learning, whose medium was still the Latin tongue. The school of modern historians had then just arisen; the civil and canon law had for more than a century past been studied with renewed diligence, and formed the principal subject of study at the great university of Bologna; medicine, to which fresh vigour had been imparted by the Arab and Jewish physicians encouraged by the Suabian rulers of Naples, possessed the university of Salerno, was the leading subject at the university of Padua, and at Bologna was second only to jurisprudence. The Aristotelian philosophy, once banned by the Church, had now become her trustiest henchman; and, preserved in, if disguised by, the translations of the Arab doctors, by whom it had been commingled with Platonic, and Neo-Platonic, and Oriental doctrines, had taken the foremost place in the studies of Western scholars, and had lately been introduced into Italy under the auspices of the Emperor Frederick II. Closely connected with

the last, was that stupendous mass of scholastic theology and metaphysics, which had agitated the learned world from Erigena to Aquinas, with its disputes concerning the Eucharist, Realism and Nominalism, and other abstruse points, which excited men's minds to a degree which we can hardly conceive nowadays in connection with questions of such a purely abstract nature.

With the more profound of the above-named subjects Dante can have made no acquaintance until a much later period than that of which we are treating, but we cannot doubt that a youth of his capacity and temperament, living, too, at a period of such mental activity and devotion to letters, early acquired some knowledge of the more popular branches of learning. Nor does the fact of his weak Latinity militate against this supposition. The Latin in which a great part of the literature of the day was written was of an ultra-canine description ; the constructions being of an excessively analytic type, ignoring, —if not, as almost appears sometimes, studiously avoiding—the ordinary rules of case and gender, and wholly untrammelled by the laws of syntax. Evidently, then, it was possible to have a very competent knowledge of the contemporary Latin,

in which the current literature and the manuals of popular instruction were written, and yet find great difficulty in coping with the easiest of the classical authors.

But in Dante's day the Romance peoples were no longer dependent upon a dead language for their literature. Italy, it is true, owing chiefly, among other causes, to the wider prevalence and greater vitality of the Latin in that country, lagged somewhat behind France and Provence, perhaps even Spain, at the outset. From the two first named countries Italy borrowed an exotic literature. In the north, and especially the Trevisan March, French predominated, and became the language of polite letters and of cultured society, while French *Trouveurs* made the *Chansons de Gestes*—metrical romances of Charlemagne and Orlando and other Paladins—familiar not to the cultivated classes only, but, in a rude jargon of French interlarded with Italian dialect words, to the people at large. A little later, upon the great Celtic literary revival, when the romances of the Arthurian cycle, and the other sagas which were drawn into its vortex, took all Europe by storm, Italy shared in the contagion, and French was the language in which she read of Arthur and his Round Table,

Lancelot, Guenever, the Grail, and kindred myths.[1]

So completely did the French tongue dominate the literature of Northern Italy, that even the earliest essays of the Italians themselves in vernacular composition were made in that language. Sordello, the most famous singer of his day, wrote chiefly, though not exclusively, in French, as did most of his brother poets. It was in French that Aldobrandino wrote his treatise *Le Régime du corps*, and Martino da Canale his *Cronique des Veniciens*. The voyages of Marco Polo were first written in that language, besides many Romances of Chivalry and the like, by Italian authors, as was *Li Tresors* (*Il Tesoro*), the encyclopædic work of Brunetto Latini, who states his reason for this preference to be *por ce que la parlenze est plus delitable et plus comune à toutes gentes.*

Simultaneously with the French, Provençal

[1] Dante says of the French of his day :—"Owing to its easier and more pleasing vernacular, any prose translation or composition in the vulgar tongue is appropriate to it : namely, the books compiled from the gestes of the Trojans and the Romans ; also the most admirable fables of King Arthur, and many other works historical and instructive."—(*De Vulg. Eloq.*, I. x.)

literature became widely diffused throughout all Italy, especially in the South. Possessing less variety of subject than the French, and less rich in matter, it yet, by its superiority in artistic form, exercised a more immediate and a more durable influence upon the development of Italian poetry, though it does not appear to have greatly affected the formation of a native prose. Soon after the middle of the twelfth century Italy became the resort of Provençal Troubadours of all ranks, from the prince and noble to the wandering minstrel. Their headquarters were in Sicily, where they were warmly welcomed at the Court of William II., "The Good," and of the equally culture-loving, and more cultured, Frederick II. and Manfred. They visited, besides, the other states of Italy, especially after the crusade against the Albigenses had forced many of them to seek an asylum abroad. Even at this early date, Florence, it would seem, stood high in point of culture, for we find Raimund de Tors, an exiled Troubadour, in the early part of the thirteenth century, writing to his *confrère* Gaucelm, urging him to "seek shelter in the noble city of the Florentines, which is called Florence, where all true valour is maintained:

there are perfected and adorned joy, song and love." As in the North of Italy the earliest Italian authors wrote in French, so in Sicily and Naples did the native poets rhyme in the tongue and metre of the Troubadours.

But the Italians were not long contented with this literary subjection to aliens. In the latter part of the twelfth century, many of the Italian *Trovatori* began to rhyme, after Provençal models, it is true, but in their own dialects, and by the middle of the thirteenth century all Italy was vocal with the songs of Italian singers, rhyming in their native tongue.[1]

[1] Although the Italian word *Trovatore* is the same as the Provençal *Troubadour* (*Trouveur* being the French form), and although their works were of the same character, both in subject and form, the two classes widely differed socially. The Troubadours of higher rank were a kind of poetical knights-errant; those of the lower rank were wandering ministrels; while the majority partook largely of both characters. The Italian Trovatori, on the other hand, differ but little in their lives from other classes of *littérateurs*, and do not appear to have cultivated the fantastic chivalry, or practised the vagabond habits, of the Troubadours. They were distinguished from the *Poeti* mainly by the circumstance that in their compositions they gave themselves up to a native vein of talent without studying the rules of art. Their name (*Trovatori* = "finders") im-

In this national movement the Sicilian school took the lead, but, though it can claim some priority in point of time, and undoubtedly exercised great influence upon the rest of Italy, yet independent, and almost contemporary, schools arose in other parts, especially in Bologna and Tuscany, through one or two of which channels the main stream of Italian poetry flowed, so soon as it had acquired any considerable depth and volume.

The Trovatori, like their Provençal masters, though personal satire and contemporary politics often formed the subject of their verse, derived their chief inspiration from that everlasting theme of love, which recurs with such wearisome persistence, and with such monotony of treatment, throughout the poetry of the middle ages. Nevertheless, the Trovatori deserve a higher reputation than that usually accorded to them. However closely they may have followed Provençal models, they are not a mere servile herd of imitators. Their verse is often melodious and graced by a rare beauty of expression ; it is fresh and spontaneous, and not wanting in such originality as is compatible

plies as much. Dante observed this distinction both in the *Vita Nuova* and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia.*

with the absence of all profundity, and with the trammels of received convention, to burst which no supreme genius had yet arisen.

Even these trammels were gradually shaken off. This movement towards emancipation was inaugurated by the Sicilian poets, several of whom, quitting the conventionalities of their school, sought to clothe deeper thought and feeling in more original modes of expression, and evince much appreciation of the moral and spiritual elements of love, and of its metaphysical relations to the intellectual self.[1]

[1] Jacopo, a Notary of Lentino, one of the most melodious and original singers of his time, has a passage which must surely have inspired at least one passage of Dante's *Vita Nuova*. (See especially the Canzone in c. xix., stanza 2.) Hear Jacopo: "O glorious King, full of all mercy, give no heed to the prayers which the saints prefer to Thee, nor to the angels which stand before Thee, who, for their own delight, beg for my lady. Give heed to us, who discern in her beauty that love whence we learn to love, and perceive, one and all, that in her is Thy majesty depicted; so that, beholding her, we may bless Thy mighty power, which hath given us an ensample of Thee, for our faith's sake. And didst not Thou show us great mercy, each one of us would die despairing, so greatly do we love." Again, in a sonnet wherein he inquires into the nature of perfect love, he defines its essence to be such as to exclude all possibility of its ever ending. It is to continue beyond this life, and

Similar characteristics mark several singers of the early Tuscan school,[1] but the meta-

he looks to meet his lady in Paradise, which, without her, would have no joys for him.

An anonymous early Sicilian poet hymns the praises of the "*Intelligenza*," personified as his lady, in a long poem in *nona rima*, one of the most beautiful productions of his school. "She is a mirror," he says, concerning this allegorical lady, or, perhaps, real lady allegorized, "of wondrous clearness; a form of fair semblants and of delight. By the splendour of her rich goodness is each dame and damsel ennobled (*s'aggenza*)." "True love set her in the world to move every wise man to wonder." "Her supermarvellous (*sovramirabile*) beauty makes all the world more lucent and clear, wise and courteous, and of fresh youthfulness." "Love of his own courtesy, to make his grace to me complete, scorning not my base condition, granted me the sensible perception of himself." We can hardly doubt that Dante had this last passage in mind when he wrote the sonnet or *ballata* in c. vii. of the *Vita Nuova*.

[1] Pacino Angiolieri of Florence (fl. circ. 1250) writes to his lady: "Verily, you bear upon your head a crown of right high worth—of honour, to wit—wherein you surpass all other ladies." Pacino wrote, besides, a poem of singular beauty and pathos upon his lady's death.

Maestro Torrigiano, a compatriot and contemporary of Pacino, sings: "Love, the song and cry of the folk, is a desire of the soul, which keeps her meditating upon the joy of love, wherein she trusts. And this is love's special property: that by his helm alone is the soul guided."

So Giovanni dell' Orto, of Arezzo: "Love alone—for he knoweth a pure and noble heart—hovers over her,

physical school of love poetry attained to its height in the person of Guido Guinicelli of Bologna (1220-77), who stood at the head of the singers of his day. Dante himself speaks of him with high admiration, and in many passages shows how much he was influenced by him. It was Guido Guinicelli who wrote the lines, quoted, lauded, and imitated by Dante :—

> Al cor gentil ripara sempre Amore,
> Come l'augello in selva alla verdura,
> Nè fè amor prima che gentil core,
> Nè gentil cor prima d'amor, natura.

"Unto the gentle heart aye repaireth Love, even as the bird in wood to the green foliage ; nor did nature create love before the gentle heart, nor the gentle heart before love."

Guinicelli's theory of love is in complete harmony with that of his illustrious disciple ; he dwells with especial emphasis upon its ennobling and elevating power over its possessor. In many passages of his philosophical poetry he anticipates, perhaps inspires,

and then turns to her ; and straightway, when he is come to her, he nourisheth and adorneth her with a good perfect beyond nature."

It would be easy to multiply similar quotations were any object to be served in doing so.

his greater successor. Then he lays down the principle which Dante declares and defends with such fiery eloquence in the 4th book of the *Convito*, namely, that nobility consists not in high birth, but in virtue only.[1] Further, he anticipates Dante's favourite axiom, that in the culture of the reason and intellect lies the sole distinction between the rational man and the irrational beast.[2]

Yet nearer, in every way, to our poet was he whom Dante himself styles "the foremost of my friends," and whose friendship contributed so much to the formation of Dante's personal

[1] The amusing vehemence with which he supports this thesis is worth recording. He says, that should any maintain the contrary, "answer should be made to such bestiality, not with words, but with the knife. *Risponder si vorrebbe, non colle parole, ma col coltello, a tanta bestialità.* This *argumentum ad cultellum* was quite in accordance with the rules of controversy then in favour. St. Louis, one of the best and most benevolent of men, held similar views. Joinville reports a conversation respecting disputes with unbelievers, wherein, "'So I tell you,' said the king, 'that none, an he be not a right good clerk, should reason with them; but the layman, whenso he heareth the Christian law reviled, should not defend the Christian law, save with the sword, wherewith it behoveth him to let drive into the belly, so far as ever it will go.'"

[2] Cp. *Convito* IV., vii.; *Inferno* XXVI., etc., etc.

character and of his opinions, literary and political. Further particulars concerning the man and his writings are given in note 7 to chapter iii. of the *Vita Nuova*, but we may, perhaps, consider here one or two instances of the close coincidence of his mental attitude with that of Dante. Like the latter, he traces back all love to its source in that Primal Love, *τὸ νοητόν*, which, according to Aristotle, *κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενον*, "moves, not being moved," *ὡς ἐρώμενον* "as being the object of love" (Metaph. xii. 7). Thus Guido writes :—"O Primal Love immovable which movest the whole, and guidest so that the motion is ordered by thy power alone!" The ennobling power of beauty in the object of a pure earthly love is thus described :—

"If love honoureth a lady so exalted as is this blessed one, no marvel is it to him who observes rightly, and considers her benignity. . . . In her is angelic beauty resplendent, with such great glory that, as he looks upon her, every man bends down his gaze." The reader will at once perceive the close resemblance of this passage to many in the *Vita Nuova*.

In Italy, as in almost every country, the first essays at a national literature took the form of poetry, for prose, although an earlier

growth of language than poetry, is at first of that unconscious kind which M. Jourdain spoke. Before long, however, the new-born activity of Italian literature extended to prose composition. Its earliest form was that of translations from the French, often of works originally written in that language by Italian authors. Among these were the Travels of Marco Polo, the *Tesoro* of Brunetto Latini; and the *Governamento dei Principi* of Egidio Colonna. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, there appeared many translations of moral and religious works, generally in the form of precepts or aphorisms taken from the fathers or later divines; academic treatises, too, in Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectics, etc., besides translations and digests of various French romances of the Charlemagne and Arthurian cycles.

At the same time, works of religion and ethics, history and rhetoric, were translated from the Latin. These were soon followed by original compositions, sometimes of a religious or otherwise edifying nature, such as Brunetto Latini's *Il Tesoretto*, sometimes in the shape of fiction, such as the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, most of which, though some were written in the

fourteenth century, are considered to be of an earlier date than that of Dante's writings. The close of the thirteenth century was further signalized by the advent of the pioneers of that Italian school of historians, who, in the following century and a half, occupy so conspicuous a place in the national literature in its best days.

All these earlier writers, both in prose and verse, employed the dialect of the district to which they belonged. It is true that in the form in which they have reached us, these dialectical divergencies are often comparatively slight, and this has led some critics to regard the language in which they appear as the inchoation of that *lingua aulica* so greatly desired by Dante; a language, that is, which should comprise the excellencies of each dialect, while itself belonging to none. The explanation, however, of this similarity in the language of writers belonging to different districts, is to be found in the fact of their having been handed down to us, for the most part, by Tuscan copyists, who purposely and avowedly Tuscanized the authors they transcribed; by which process, though they destroyed much which would have possessed high antiquarian and historical interest for posterity, they yet undoubtedly

aided in the establishment of the Tuscan as the literary language *par excellence.*

The religious movements of the age likewise did much to foster the growth of the vernacular. As Luther, by his translation of the Bible, and by his hymn-book, finally settled the German tongue, so must the preaching and ministrations of the Dominican and Franciscan orders have contributed, though in a less degree, to the formation of a general Italian speech, and to the smoothing away of some of the harsher discrepancies between the various dialects. It was to the Franciscans, moreover, that the Italians owed the inception of their popular religious poetry. St. Francis' famous hymn to the Sun, written in the beginning of the thirteenth century, probably the first composition of its kind, was speedily followed by a number of other hymns in the vernacular, and notably, about half a century later, by the rhapsodical and mystical poems of Jacopone da Todi.

Nor should the purely popular literature of the country be forgotten, the folk-songs, and folk-stories, which, though few have reached us in their original form, must have existed in profusion, and have been familiar to all classes of

the community. This popular literature was doubtless rich and varied: in verse there would be love-songs, heroic ballads, narrative poems, pathetic and tragic, and rude essays in satire. In prose there would be the legends of the saints, tales of popular mythology and superstition, stories of Italian history, from the early Roman and pre-Roman days, through the wars and conquests of the barbarians, down to the almost contemporary exploits of the Hohenstauffen kings and crusaders, and the atrocities of the Eccelini. The popular literature could also boast many stories of the Eulenspiegel type, the point whereof lay in some practical joke, or repartee, or piece of *niaiserie*,—a species of humour which appealed strongly to the mediæval taste, and still more, perhaps, in Florence than in any other southern country, the wits of the people being keen, and tinged with a certain *bourgeois* grossness.

Again, the chain of tradition, linking modern times with antiquity, was never completely broken in Italy. The Roman history was in some degree the national history, and the Roman literature a national literature. Thus the *débris* of Roman myth and history entered largely into the popular literature of the middle ages, and its heroes—though often *diablement*

changés en route (witness Virgil and Ovid, transformed by tradition into potent necromancers), became the heroes of the folk-tale. Of this Dante himself bears witness, in his exquisite description of life in old Florence (Par. xv.), where he places before us the *thätige Hausfrau* presiding over her maidens in their spinning, the while she tells them "fables of Troy, and Fesole, and Rome."

Florence, in common with the other cities of the North of Italy, could also show some vague outlines of a popular drama. The ancient Mimes and Atellane Farces had left their descendants, which afterwards developed into the *Commedie dell' Arti*, in which the *dramatis personæ* were certain stereotyped characters, while the dialogue was for the most part improvised. In the course of the thirteenth century, too, poems upon the crusades, the romances of chivalry, etc., used to be sung upon a stage, accompanied with action. At the same time, the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* presented sacred subjects in a more or less dramatic form.

Life in Dante's native city was no less stimulating in its active than in its scholastic aspect. In population, in wealth, in commerce, in military importance, in learning, culture and mental activity generally, Florence, at this

period, was far ahead of Rome, and was one of the foremost cities of the age. During the twelfth century, its internal politics had consisted, in great measure, of the armed conflicts between the different noble houses, and in the struggle for political power between the nobles and the people. In this struggle the people were victorious, and the nobles of the Florentine *Contado* were one after another forced, or consented, to hold their territories as vassals of the Commune, or else to raze their fastnesses, and take up their abode within the city. The immediate effect of this wise and vigorous policy—wise, in spite of the unforeseen and ultimately disastrous results of importing into the state the feuds of the aristocracy, and thus infecting it with the disease which finally proved its ruin—was greatly to extend and consolidate the power of the republic, and to infuse into it the energy, the warlike spirit, and more cultured tastes of the nobles who now became its leading citizens.

In the year 1215, Florence was stricken with the Guelf and Ghibelline madness, and for half a century was torn in sunder between the contending parties, now one and now the other obtaining a temporary victory, accompanied by

massacres and arson, and followed by proscriptions and confiscations, until their opponents, availing themselves of domestic discontents or of foreign alliances, succeeded in ousting them, and in winning a brief ascendancy for themselves.

On the whole, the predominance was with the Ghibelline party, who, to a certain extent, represented the aristocratic principle, and they grossly abused their ascendency, their cruelty to their vanquished opponents and the oppressive nature of their rule contributing at least as much as party feeling to each revolution which drove them from power, and set up in their place their Guelf antagonists, who, though mainly led by nobles, had identified themselves, whether from sympathy or policy, with the popular cause. This constant see-saw of parties was put an end to by the defeat of the Hohenstauffen, the heads of the Ghibelline party, by Charles of Anjou, at Benevento (1266), where Manfred was slain. In the following year, the Guelfs, then in exile, returned to Florence. Their power being now established on a firm basis, by the ruin of the Ghibelline cause throughout Italy, they remodelled the constitution, giving the people a larger share in the government, which was now

carried on by mixed councils of the nobles and *popolani.*

From this time there was a long period of comparative peace, broken from time to time by fitful contests respecting the partial restoration to political rights of the Ghibellines,[1] now no longer formidable, and by the growing arrogance and lawlessness of the Guelf faction.[2] All this time the constitution was becoming more and more democratic, every fresh contest between the nobles and the people resulting in a new constitution, by which wider powers were given to the latter. The most notable of these constitutions, and that which formed the basis, with more or less important modifications, of future constitutions, was that of 1282. By it the

[1] By the constitution of 1280, six of the fourteen chief magistrates were to be Ghibellines.

[2] "The Guelf nobility had become insolent, and feared not the magistrates, so that every day were committed many homicides and other acts of violence, without those who committed them being punished, they being the favourites of some or other noble."—Machiavelli: History of Florence, Bk. II., cxi. Nevertheless, these sporadic crimes of violence, from which no state was free in those troublous times, were very different from the tyrannical *imperium in imperio*, shortly afterwards established by the Heads of the Guelf party, an oligarchy dominating, though unrecognized by, the constitution.

supreme power was vested in the Priors, or Heads of the three (afterwards six) Greater Arts, or Commercial Guilds, together with the Gonfalonier of Justice, a *popolano*, who held the command of a civic force for the preservation of peace. Thus no noble could take part in the supreme magistracy, unless he consented to waive his dignity, and become a *popolano*, by enrolling himself in one of the Commercial Guilds, as, indeed, very many nobles did. The Priors held office for two months, during the whole of which time they remained shut up in the Palace, transacting the business of the state, being allowed to hold no private communication with those without. The Legislative, Judicial and Executive functions were discharged by a complicated system of councils, chosen by different methods, and out of different classes of citizens.

One of the most remarkable institutions was that of the *Podestà della Giustizia*, a curious system which arose in the third quarter of the twelfth century, and became almost universally prevalent among the republics of Northern Italy in the course of the following century. The spirit of faction so universally prevailed in these cities, that men despaired of finding among their most eminent citizens one impartial

enough to curb with even hand the excesses of both parties. It thus became customary to confide their city's peace to the care of a Podestà, who had to be a foreigner, born without a certain radius of the city; over thirty-five years of age; of illustrious family; a knight, or, if not, he was knighted by the city upon election. He was bound to bring with him and maintain a certain number, fixed by agreement, of jurisconsults, with their notaries, clerks, etc., and of knights and squires, with a police or military force. To enable him to maintain due state, and in remuneration of his services, he received a fixed salary from the public moneys. On the expiration of his term of office, his conduct was subjected to a *sindicato*, or scrutiny, when, if he had abused the powers committed to him, he was punished with fine and ignominy; if, on the contrary, he had deserved well of the state, he was escorted home with great honours and rich gifts.

The first appointment of a Podestà in Florence took place in the year 1207. His tribunal was the supreme court in civil and criminal causes, but, in the latter, his jurisdiction could only be exercised on the written complaint of the injured party or his relatives.

This anomalous system was generally found, though with many exceptions, to work well, especially in the larger and more powerful cities; in the smaller, the Podestà, as might have been expected, would sometimes be unwilling to resign the sweets of power, and would set up an independent tyranny.

What we know of the social life of Florence at the end of the thirteenth century, proves that it must have been singularly rich and attractive. The worst of her civil discords were temporarily allayed, and no foreign war seriously threatened either her safety or her essential welfare, the petty wars in which she was frequently engaged with neighbouring states rather serving as a healthy vent for the exuberant vitality of her sons, than constituting a grave danger or a drain upon her resources. Increasing in wealth and prosperity, Florence threw herself with characteristic energy into the pursuits at once of art and letters, commerce and pleasure. A native literature had recently come into being, and was taking rapid growth; the classics were beginning to be studied with a quickened diligence; the dawn of modern art, though not yet risen, had begun to whiten the horizon, and into all these paths of activity the Floren-

tines, keen of wit, restless and vehement of temperament, and strong of fibre, were eagerly pressing.

The peculiar relation in which the nobles stood to the state at large must have exercised a potent influence upon the social development of the latter. Subjected to the people, and not only shorn of special privileges, but, by the very fact of their birth, rendered incapable of enjoying the full rights of citizens without divesting themselves of their nobility, they yet, by compliance with the requisite formalities, managed to secure a large share of substantial power, and that pre-eminence in the state for which they were well adapted. Closely linked with, but not completely fused in, the body of the people, they were enabled at once to take the initiative in arms, in politics and in letters, and, at the same time, to communicate to their fellow-citizens something of the especial virtues of an aristocracy—marked individuality, a code of honour, refinement of manners, respect for self and for others. Italian chivalry is usually regarded as an exotic importation, a pale reflection of the northern chivalry, as a matter of holiday pageantry rather than as the ideal to which every noble life should conform.

There is much truth in this view; the Italian nobility never, as a whole, devoted themselves to that enthusiastic and semi-religious cult of the laws of chivalry, which was regarded as the normal existence of the privileged classes in France and Germany. But here, as is often the case, the event proved the truth of Hesiod's axiom that the half is sometimes greater than the whole. In the north, its proper home, chivalry was the cherished possession of the few, who, by making its rules the ideal guide of life, were enabled to attain to a certain narrow self-perfection, while they added thereby to the height and strength of the barriers which shut them off from their fellows. In the Italian republics, however, the truer and healthier relation in which the nobility stood to the citizens at large, caused the principles of chivalry to become more diffused among the people, and substituted for the exclusive observance of the point of personal honour, which, though to a certain extent ennobling, was wholly self-regarding, a regard for and jealousy of the honour and true dignity of the community. Thus was fostered a principle of the truest democracy,—a recognition of the right of all classes to share in that nobility which consists

in obligations rather than privileges; and thus, in these communities of tanners and silk-weavers, woolcombers and usurers, we occasionally meet with the strange spectacle of a government guided by the rules of honour rather than the interests of the moment, and a people preferring justice to success.[1]

The progress made by Florence in wealth and culture had the usual effect of bringing in its train a corresponding advance in luxury, or, as some would style it, corruption. At an earlier period, social life in Florence, even among the most eminent citizens, had been remarkable for its simplicity. Of this life Dante gives a charming picture in the *Paradiso* (c. XV.), where his ancestor, Cacciaguida, is made to speak.

> Florence, within her ancient limit-mark,
> Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,
> Was chaste and sober, and abode at peace.

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[1] Of course it is not intended to deny that the political dealings of the Italian republics, as of all states of every age, race, and form of government, were generally characterized by rapacity, injustice, and perfidy; nevertheless signal instances of an opposite character are by no means rare. See the picturesque account in Fauriel, *Dante et les Origines de la langue et de la littérature italiennes*. Vol. I., Lecture iii.

She had no armlets and no head-tires then,
No purpled tires, no zone that caught the eye
More than the person did. Time was not yet
When at his daughter's birth the sire grew pale,
For fear the age and dowry should exceed
On each side just proportion. House was none
Void of its family ; nor yet had come
Sardanapalus, to exhibit feats
Of chamber prowess. . . .
I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad
In leathern girdle and a clasp of bone ;
And, with no artful colour on her cheeks,
His lady leaves the glass. The sons I saw
Of Nerli and of Vecchio well content
With unrobed jerkin ; and their good dames handling
The spindle and the flax. O happy they !
Each sure of burial in her native land,
And none left desolate a-bed for France !
One waked to tend the cradle, hushing it
With sounds that lull'd the parent's infancy :
Another, with her maidens, drawing off
The tresses from the distaff, lectured them
Old tales of Troy and Fesole and Rome.

(*Cary's Translation.*)

Nor is this description a mere poetical laudation of the past, exalting it, as usual, into a golden age. It is fully borne out by the chronicler Villani, Dante's somewhat younger contemporary, who gives a detailed description of the simplicity of life prevailing so late as the year 1259.

"The citizens of Florence," says Villani,

"lived soberly and upon coarse food, and at small expense, and many of their customs and fashions were gross and rude; and they were clad, themselves and their wives, in coarse cloth, and many wore bare leather garments, without cloth, and with caps on their heads, and all with boots on their feet; and the Florentine ladies with boots without any ornaments; and the greatest ladies put up with a gown, quite close, of coarse scarlet stuff of Ypres or Camo, girt about with a strap, in the antique style, and a mantle lined with fur, with a cape above, and this they wore over the head; and the women of the commoner sort went clad in coarse green stuff of Cambray, made after the like fashion. Of such like habit, and rude customs, were the Florentines of that period; but they were of good faith, and loyal to one another, and to their commune, and with all their rough living and their poverty they achieved greater actions and of more virtue than have been performed in our times of greater softness and of greater wealth."

But this antique simplicity was of short duration. Writing in 1330, Villani describes the Florentine ladies of his own day as going about "in a superabundance of ornaments—

crowns and chaplets of gold, and silver, and pearls, and precious stones—and with nets and certain intertwined garlands of pearls, and other rare adornments for the head, of great cost; and likewise in slashed garments of divers kinds of cloth, and of stuffs embroidered with silk, and in sundry fashions, with fringes, and pearls, and silver buttons, often gilt, and in three or four rows joined together, and buckled at the breast with pearls and precious stones, in various figures and letters." This account is confirmed by the oldest of Dante's commentators, and by the novels of Sacchetti, and extravagance in attire rose to such a height that sumptuary laws were passed, forbidding any woman to wear a crown or chaplet, or embroidered robes, or jewellery, or more than two rings. The luxury thus inveighed against was not confined to feminine attire, but was apparent in all circumstances of public and domestic life, as contemporary writers testify.[1]

[1] The height to which luxury had risen in Tuscany is best shown by the sonnets of Folgore da San Gemignano, a noble Sienese poet, who wrote, probably, about the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century. In these sonnets he depicts the ideal life of the noble classes, a life of the utmost gaiety and magnificence. They form, as it were, a calendar, in which every month

It is true that the state of things described by Villani prevailed at a period a generation and

of the year, each day of the week, and each hour of the day has its allotted pleasure—field sports, pageants, banquets, *fêtes champêtres*, music, dancing—all on the most sumptuous scale, with splendid raiment, and the height of good living. Chivalry, too, has its place in Folgore's ideal life, but rather as an added grace than as the main *devoir* of a gentleman. Not that Folgore's ideal gentleman was to be a mere carpet knight. Fighting was a necessary item in the programme, a portion of each Tuesday being devoted to that species of entertainment. War, indeed, is treated as a mere diversion, like everything else in life, but it is to be pursued with vigour, and Folgore gives a vivid picture of the rout of the enemy, and of the horses dragging their fallen masters among the entrails of the slain, scattered about the field.

These sonnets reveal how wealthy Tuscany laid all Europe under contribution for its entertainment. The sonnet on April gives a list of sundry articles of luxury imported from abroad, which displays certain traits of the exporting countries quite in harmony with their more modern characters. Thus, Spain sends horses, Provence songs and dances, France musicians, Germany brass music (German bands?).

Of course, Folgore's picture of social life is mainly an ideal one, or only realized, if at all, in his own Siena, among the *Brigata Goderecchia*, of which he was a member, a club of rich and noble spendthrifts who devoted their energies to the dissipation of their fortunes in every kind of luxury and wanton extravagance, a laudable design, in which their efforts were crowned with

a half later than that of which we are now treating; nevertheless the advance of the Florentines in luxury, the natural consequence of peace and wealth, had already begun. Villani himself especially notes the year 1283 as exhibiting a great increase in the splendour with which the customary May festivities were celebrated. As we have seen from a passage already quoted from Boccaccio, it was customary in Florence, as in most countries, to welcome in the May with sports, and festivals, and *villeggiature*. These festivities, in the pleasure-seeking and pageant-loving city of Florence, were prolonged, more or less, through the months of May and June, and were made the occasion of public and private celebrations of great pomp and magnificence. Villani speaks of one company consisting of a thousand men and upwards, who, all clad in white, and under the leadership of a Lord of Love, would parade the city in procession on every day of the festival, accompanied with joyous music; they then repaired to the country, where they spent the day in mirth and feasting,

such success that most of them were reduced to beggary in less than a year. Nevertheless, making the necessary allowances, we can still perceive the luxury and magnificence prevalent among the wealthier classes.

sports and dances, in which ladies, knights and others took part, until evening. Other chroniclers speak of other similar companies, who wore uniforms of silk, velvet, and gold samite of various colours, and were adorned with garlands and diadems.

This same year of 1283 brings us to Dante's second recorded meeting with Beatrice. He was now eighteen, and she nearly a year younger; thus, nine years had elapsed since he had first beheld and loved her. As we have already seen, for some time after this first meeting, he sought frequent opportunities of seeing her, but the terms in which he describes their second meeting would lead us to infer that these occasions had long ceased. How far Dante's childish love for Beatrice contributed to the passion which he now conceived for her, or how far this was a continuation of the former, it is impossible to say. That he himself regarded this, the love of his life, as dating from that first meeting with her, and as suffering no interruption, is placed beyond all question by many passages alike in the present work, and in the *Commedia*. True, the description contained in the *Vita Nuova*, c. ii., of the results produced by that first meeting—the violent agitation,

mental and physical, which he then experienced, the dominion which Love thenceforth assumed over him, the ennobling influence of Beatrice's image which abode continually with him—appears somewhat highly coloured, when we remember that these experiences purport to be those of a boy of nine. That the event there related actually occurred, we cannot doubt, nor need it tax our belief. Children are essentially imitative animals, and just as they imitate their elders by playing at soldiers, at horses, or at shop, so do they sometimes imitate them by playing at lovers ; the play in this case deriving additional reality and duration from the affection actually felt for a favourite playmate, but being outgrown at length, when other childish games are outgrown. When, however, as in Dante's case, the object of this childish flame, met with in after years, becomes the love of mature life, the mind must be prone to relate back to that earlier time, and, bridging over the interval between, to confuse the re-awakened memory with continuity of experience.

In the present case, no doubt, something of this mental operation may be detected, for whatever nucleus of reality existed in Dante's boyish passion, and that some such nucleus did

exist we may be sure, some of the effects which the sight of Beatrice is asserted to have produced upon him are such as presuppose an experience, literary and otherwise, impossible in a boy of nine, even though that boy be a young Dante.

Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that there are cases on record of a very strong and unmistakable love subsisting at a very early age. Such was the love which Byron felt for Mary Duff, the little Highland girl with whom he used to play upon the Aberdeenshire hills, he aged eight, and she six, a love which was, perhaps, the most deep-seated he ever knew, as it certainly was the most durable, retaining, as it did, sufficient power, after he had grown up, and had not seen her for well-nigh a dozen years past, to cause the sudden news of her marriage to communicate a violent shock to him.

Alfieri, too, affirms that at the age of *five* he experienced a love which gave colour to the whole of his after life, and to this he attributes great influence upon his poetical development. Many similar instances might be adduced, to show that the experiences which Dante records of his early days are neither impossible nor

unexampled, although the aftergrowth which sprang from this seed was such as could find being in none save him alone.

What renders Dante's case the more remarkable, is the fact that he and Beatrice, in those early days, were never so much as playmates even; indeed, until this second meeting, the very sound of her voice, so he tells us, had never reached his ears. Upon returning home after this meeting he fell asleep, and his excited fancy presented to him the vision of the eaten heart, which he related in a sonnet (c. iii.), the earliest of his poems still surviving, although, as he tells us, he had ere this taught himself the art of verse. The sonnet is memorable as having led to the great friendship of Dante's life, that with Guido Cavalcanti, whose influence, as pointed out elsewhere, became so potent a factor in Dante's mental evolution. Probably, too, this was the occasion of Dante's becoming acquainted with others of his brother poets, to whom, in orthodox Troubadour fashion, he sent this sonnet, praying them for their interpretation thereof. Of the replies which he received four have reached us, those, namely, of Guido Cavalcanti, Dante da Maiano, Cecco

Angiolieri and Cino da Pistoia;[1] if, indeed, the sonnet generally ascribed to the latter be really his, seeing that he was only thirteen at the time. Guido wrote in a style becoming a friend, putting a favourable interpretation upon the vision, which signified, according to his rede, that it was well to be in Love's power:—Love took Dante's heart and fed Beatrice withal, as knowing that she was destined to die; Love's weeping at his departure was expounded as a favourable omen, by the well-known rule of interpretation by contraries. Cino held that Love, by feeding Beatrice with Dante's heart, communicated to her his passion, and wept to think of the love-pangs that she would undergo for him. The reply of Dante da Maiano is severely practical, rather than either poetical or courteous, referring to the stomach the cause of the vision, and advocating appropriate remedies.

[1] A notary of Pistoia, b. 1270, exiled for his partisanship of the Ghibelline cause. He held high office under Louis of Savoy, who finally effected his reconciliation with the government of his native state. Dante highly esteemed his poetry, and associated him with himself as the promoters of a literary Italian language. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he constantly refers to *Cinus Pistoriensis et amicus ejus*, by the latter meaning himself.

Cecco's answer is couched in humble terms, paying homage to Dante as to his superior, but merely pointing out what he conceived to be contradictions in the vision, and stating that he now understood, and now understood not.

From this time forth, Dante was "wholly given up to his thoughts concerning that most gentle being," and fell into such a morbid and brooding habit that his health suffered thereby. This was remarked by those who knew him, and they sought to discover the cause, but he, not wishing to divulge his lady's name, would not answer them. About this time, chance suggested to him a further expedient for keeping his secret inviolate, upon which it is worth while to dwell a little, as illustrating some curious features of the mediæval *Frauendienst*. Beatrice was one day listening to a sermon, whereat Dante also was, observing her intently. Directly between them sat another lady, upon whom Dante's eyes, as they gazed over her at their object beyond, appeared to be resting, as she herself deemed to be the case, and as others thought, whom the fixity of Dante's gaze had not escaped. Hence occurred to Dante the brilliant thought of making this lady his stalking-horse, so that, by rendering to her a

feigned homage, he might divert any suspicion which might arise of his real love for Beatrice.

All went well for a time, but at length the lady in question had occasion to leave Florence. Dante at first was left disconsolate, but soon resolved, or, as he puts it, was bidden by Love in another vision, to get him a fresh screen, in the person of a second lady; a mandate he so well obeyed, that soon a scandal arose thereanent, and "passed beyond the bounds of courtesy." He now found that he had been only too successful in his mystification, for Beatrice, hearing of these rumours, showed her disapproval of Dante's supposed misconduct by withholding from him her salutation, which she had been wont to bestow upon him when they met, such being the sole intercourse that passed between them, and wherein, he says, "abode all his bliss." Now was Dante sore dismayed, and betook himself to solitude and tears. Then came to him another dream, real or fictitious, wherein Love bade him put away all disguise, and justify himself in verse; which he did, though, apparently, without any immediate result.

There is something very ludicrous in this episode, heightened by the *naïveté* with which

Dante relates it, evidently without a suspicion of the humour of it. On the contrary, he describes his behaviour with an air of quiet complacency, pluming himself thereupon, as though his delicacy were something highly meritorious, without appearing to recognize the possibility of his conduct being somewhat unfair to the two ladies whom he successively used to screen his real passion by feigning love for them. We can only hope that these ladies were somewhat of coquettes, and could take their part in the game for the game's sake, and without much regard for the stakes, not averse from a passing affair with the rising young poet, even with, or especially with, its accompanying *esclandre.* This must be said for Dante, that what he did was in strict accordance with established Troubadour precedent, it being a frequent practice of their bards to conceal their actual love by a pretended love for some other.[1]

[1] For instance, Folquet de Marseilles feigned a passion for the sister of Barral de Baux, Viscount of Marseilles, to disguise his love for the latter's sister, Adalasia. So, too, Pons de Capdeuil, another Troubadour, made use of the Vicountess of Marseilles as a "screen" to conceal his platonic attachment for Adalasia, wife of the Lord of Mercœur.

All this while, the question naturally presents itself, was this fervid love of Dante for Beatrice returned by her? but to this question his writings give no answer, beyond, at most, the vaguest inferences. We might perhaps be induced to answer it in the affirmative, by the offence taken by Beatrice at the scandal current anent Dante's supposed liaison with his second "screen," whereby we are naturally led to infer that Dante and his doings were not altogether indifferent to her.

About this time, Dante was taken by a friend to a wedding feast, at which Beatrice was also present. Many commentators have supposed that this may have been Beatrice's own wedding, who, as we learn from her father's will, dated January, 1287, was already at that time the wife of Simone de' Bardi, a member of one of the most honourable and wealthy houses of Florence, or, indeed, of Europe. This conjecture, which no positive evidence either supports or impugns, is not in itself destitute of probability. We cannot presume that Dante remained unaffected by Beatrice's marriage, or that he would have failed to give some indication of it in his amatory history, while that such hint should be a dark one would be quite in

keeping with the course adopted by him throughout the work. The conjecture, if true, would afford an additional reason for the violent pertubation into which Dante was thrown at the sight of Beatrice among the wedding guests, and which, despite his efforts to dissemble, made itself manifest to all in the commotion of his countenance. Beatrice herself observed it, and in common with the other ladies, her friends, was moved to laughter, as well she might be. This unkindness on the part of his mistress, though we can neither blame nor wonder at it, smote cruelly upon Dante. He returned home, and for some time to come remained sunk in despondency, breathing an unwholesome atmosphere of longing and regrets, which he describes in cc. xiv.-xvi. of the *Vita Nuova*, and the series of sonnets then produced, but upon which he wisely declines to dwell (c. xvii.).

One day, while he was still in this morbid state, he was accosted by some ladies, who questioned him concerning his plight and the causes thereof; whereupon he told them of his love, of his bliss subsisting in Beatrice's salutation, and of this being now withheld from him, so that the only joy now left him was in speak-

ing of her. To this they replied, that had what he said been true, he would have framed his poetry in other wise, instead of devoting it to the description of his own condition. This speech formed an epoch in Dante's poetical development, and as such he recognized it. Struck by the remarks of his fair critic, he passed his verse in review before him, and found that it did in fact record his own emotions merely, instead of celebrating the praises of his lady. Taking this to heart, he remained a while in some perplexity, but the final result of his cogitations was that he broke away from the old conventional school of the Troubadours, and took the step, which had already been taken by several of his predecessors and contemporaries,—among others, by the Anonymous Sicilian, by Jacopo da Lentino, Giovanni dell' Orto, Noffo Buonaguida, Maestro Torrigiano, Guido Guinicelli, Guido Cavalcanti, etc.—to a poetry which had its roots below the surface of the senses and emotions, and sought for the metaphysical and spiritual verities underlying phenomena. This sloughing of the poetical chrysalis is rendered memorable by the first-fruits of the *dolce stilo nuovo* to which Dante had now turned,—the magnificent

Canzone, "*Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*,"— the highest flight of the Italian muse up to that time, quickly followed by the exquisite sonnet *Amor e cor gentil sono una cosa*, a melody upon a theme already treated by Guido Guinicelli.

In the Canzone, Dante sets forth his lady's worth, not by describing the beauties of her face and form, but by dwelling on the ennobling influence which radiated from her, paralyzing every vile thought in all beholders, and inspiring them with a truly celestial love. In order to do this in the highest terms, he does not even shrink from the bold course of bringing the Deity Himself upon the scene, in colloquy with His saints, who are represented as praying Him to supply the one thing lacking to Heaven's bliss by translating Beatrice thither.[1] The poem is further remarkable as containing indications that the germ of Dante's great work had even thus early taken root within his mind :— not, indeed, of the *Commedia*, such as we have it, but of some poem whose scene should be the world beyond, and its subject the praise of his lady. In all probability, the work, as originally conceived, was intended to be modelled after

[1] Compare the passage from Jacopo da Lentino cited in Note 1 to p. 30, *ante*.

the style of those visions of the world of spirits which enjoyed so great a popularity in the Middle Ages.

From the very first, the path of Dante's love had been clouded by the shadow of death. The vision which gave rise to the first sonnet in the *Vita Nuova* had been presageful of tears and death, and, so far, Guido Cavalcanti, in his interpretation of it, was only too true a prophet. Soon afterwards, the death of a young lady, Beatrice's friend, furnished another subject for Dante's verse (c. viii.), and awakened forebodings on behalf of his own lady, forebodings which ever and anon recurred to him. And now Beatrice was to experience a nearer bereavement in the death of her father, Folco Portinari, which plunged her into sore affliction. Her grief was fully shared by Dante, for whom it must have derived additional poignancy from the impossibility of his holding any communion with her, whereby he might render his sympathy effective. He has left us a simple, but wonderfully graphic, picture of himself, as he loitered before Beatrice's house, watching the ladies, her friends, as they went and came on their visits of condolence to her, gathering from their sorrowful looks and broken talk

what he could concerning his mistress' plight, and picking up such stray scraps of sympathy for himself as his wretched aspect induced them to bestow.

A few days later, whether it was that the morbid excitement of his mind had affected his bodily health, or from some other cause, he fell sick; and as he lay in a feverish trance, there came to him another vision, wherein, amid such signs and portents as the Hebrew seers made the precursors of a ruining universe, the death of Beatrice herself was announced to him, and he beheld her lying dead. Thus were the shadows growing thick about him, and the spectre which had continually been hovering about his way began to assume a more menacing aspect. It is, of course, possible that when Dante came to compose his narrative, in the light of after events, he insensibly depicted his own ever-present fear as more intense than it had actually been at the time, and that it was really but little more than one of those passing tremors and forebodings with which even the happiest love will sometimes find a fearful pleasure in dallying; but it is also possible that these tremors may have acquired additional force from the pallid tint on Beatrice's features, that

"love's own hue," that "hue of pearl," which is the only definite physical trait of his mistress which Dante has recorded.

Dante's narrative has now brought us to about his twenty-fourth year, without containing a single indication that he led any kind of life outside this life of the emotions, or that he was anything more than a puling lover.

> "Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
> Made to his mistress' eyebrow."

To infer, however, from this silence as to any active or intellectual life that no such life existed would be rash, or, rather, absurd. Dante's *Vita Nuova* does not purport to be a complete autobiography, a transcript of all that was written "in the book of his memory," but only of what stands there under a certain "rubric." Enough, I think, has been said to show that Dante could, and probably did, arrive at a very considerable proficiency in letters, such as they were, even before he had become skilled in the classical Latin. This mental culture, moreover, was not confined to that to be derived from books. During these peaceful years he entered into close relations with some of the best minds of his day. We have already seen how the poetical firstfruits

of his love won him the friendship of several among his fellow poets, and especially of the greatest among them, Guido Cavalcanti, who afterwards became "the first of his friends," besides Dante da Maiano, Cecco Angiolieri, and, then or later, Cino da Pistoia. Other friends he numbered among the poets;—Lapo Gianni, Dino Frescobaldi, Buonaggiunta degl' Urbicciani, and others, though whether any of these, besides Lapo Gianni, became acquainted with him at so early a date may be doubted. Other friendships he contracted, besides those with his fellow-craftsmen; notably with Giotto, in whose art he delighted, and with whom he sometimes consorted in after years, during his exile. Tradition, a doubtful one, it must be confessed, makes these two fellow-students under Cimabue. Another artist friend was Oderigi of Agubbio, the most distinguished miniature painter of his day. Among the votaries of the sister art of music was that Casella, for whom Dante manifested so tender an affection, enduring beyond the grave, when he met him at the foot of the Purgatorial Mount. This Casella was likewise the foremost in his own art at that day, and is said to have set some of Dante's poems to music, while Landino tells us that Dante

would often find solace in his music from the fatigues of study. Bellacqua, a famous lute-maker, and a man of culture, was likewise one of this brilliant constellation. Nor can we doubt that one of Dante's temperament, the friend, moreover, of Guido Cavalcanti and the Donati, had already begun to render himself conversant with public affairs, and to prepare for his subsequent short and disastrous, though honourable, political career.

It now befell him to have a brief experience of military life. Most of the principal Tuscan cities at this time were in the hands of the Guelf party; Arezzo, however, was Ghibelline, and, under the leadership of its Bishop, stood at the head of the newly formed Ghibelline league, which was joined by the exiles from the other cities of Tuscany. In 1288, Florence, in alliance with Siena and Pistoia, took the field against the league, and laid waste the Aretine territories. In the following year, the Aretines, encouraged by a victory which they had won over the Sienese at Pieve, and by a revolution in Pisa which placed the Ghibellines at the head of the government, mustered all the forces of the league, with the intention of striking a decisive blow at Florence, the stronghold of the Guelfs.

The Florentines, with their allies, marched forth to meet them in great force, under the supreme command of Aymeric de Narbonne, and on the 11th June, 1289, the hostile armies met at Campaldino. The vanguard of the Guelfs, mainly consisting of the Florentine troops, was under the command of Viero de' Cerchi, the reserve was commanded by his future rival, Corso Donati. Dante served in the cavalry under the former leader, apparently not without distinction. Of his presence at this battle he himself makes mention in a letter, an extract from which has been preserved by Leonardo Bruni. Speaking of the battle of Campaldino, he says, "Where I was present, not a boy in arms, and where at the beginning I experienced great fear, and at the end, the utmost joy, on account of the varying fortunes of the fight."

The battle was not wanting in heroic incidents. It was one of the many chivalrous customs observed by the Italian states in time of war, to name a certain number of champions called *feditori*—twelve with the Florentines—to commence the attack, and to snatch, as it were, an augury of victory. This custom, doubtless, was a survival of the belief, prevalent in Roman

times,—itself a relic of the times of human sacrifices—that a single champion, by devoting himself to death on behalf of his country, could ensure the victory of his comrades, a belief which inspired the patriotic self-immolation of several of the Decii. At Campaldino, it devolved upon Viero de' Cerchi, as general in command of the van, to appoint the *feditori*, whereupon, though suffering from a wound in the leg, he named first himself, then his son, and then his nephew, after which he refused to name any more, but bade those follow him who would. In a moment, not twelve, but 150, had volunteered, and rushed furiously upon the enemy. Despite this commencement, the Aretines charged in their turn with such determination that the Florentines wavered and gave way. The day was saved by Corso Donati, whose indomitable self-will and ungovernable temper, destined one day to blast at once his country's liberties and his own fair fame, now stood them both in good stead. He had been placed in command of the reserve, with strict injunctions not to stir without orders, on pain of death; but, at this supreme crisis, replying to timid counsellors that if they were to be overcome it would be little worth to study his safety by obeying orders, while death

would be but a small matter if thereby he could save his country, he charged with all his forces, and converted the threatened rout into a brilliant victory. The enemy were scattered, and the Ghibelline cause in Tuscany almost destroyed; the Bishop of Arezzo fell, fighting desperately, besides many other chiefs of the League, including three of the Uberti.

After this victory, the Florentines proceeded to the siege of Caprona, which capitulated. Here, too, Dante was present, as he has recorded in the *Commedia*.[1]

Whether it was that the healthy excitement of the campaign had a beneficial effect upon him, or that he found his lady kinder to him after his return, certain it is that Dante's writings

[1] *Inferno* XXI. :—

Thus, issuing from Caprona, once I *saw*
Th' infantry dreading, lest his covenant
The foe should break.

(*Cary's Translation.*)

In the following Canto Dante records some of his cavalry experiences :—

It hath been heretofore my chance to see
Horsemen with martial order shifting camp,
To onset sallying, or in muster ranged,
Or in retreat sometimes outsheaved for flight;
Light-armed squadrons, and fleet foragers,
Scouring thy plains, Arezzo, have I seen, etc.

assume for a while a more cheerful tone. He has escaped from the unwholesome swamps of morbid introspection to a serener atmosphere, wherein he contemplates his lady's celestial beauties, of mind and body, her virtues, and the ennobling influence which she sheds on all beholders. These chapters (xxvi.-xxviii.) deserve to be read with especial attention, as revealing the true nature of Dante's love, how real it was and heartfelt, and, at the same time, how ideal and contemplative. Desirous of treating this subject at greater length than the narrow bounds of the sonnet would permit, he began a Canzone, wherein he proposed to describe how sweet was the dominion which his lady exercised over him, and how he was ennobled thereby.

This poem, however, was destined to remain unfinished. It breaks off abruptly at the end of the first stanza, and the words which follow are a cry of bitterest grief, for Beatrice was dead. Of the circumstances of her death we know nothing, only that she died on the 9th June, 1290. Dante passes over the subject without dwelling upon it, because, he says, it does not fall within his prescribed scope, and

because his pen is not capable of treating of it worthily; also because he could not do so without becoming guilty of self-praise. The last sentence is mysterious, and Dante offers no explanation. The question, however, presents itself to our minds, whether Beatrice in her last moments might not have recognized the fidelity of her votary, and admitted that his love was returned.

The desolation brought upon Dante's life by the loss of Beatrice was proportionate to the completeness with which the thoughts of her had filled his life for so many years past. The story of his sorrow, and the sonnets in which he celebrates it, are characterized by rare beauty and pathos; at the same time, it is noteworthy that Dante describes this real calamity with much greater brevity and simplicity than those fantastic woes which he underwent in the earlier stages of his love.

Somewhat more than a year after the light of Dante's life had set in death, he experienced an afterglow of passion. Still unconsoled, he would often resort to solitude, in order to indulge his grief in secret. On one of these occasions, he espied a lady watching him from

the window of a neighbouring house, with an expression of sympathy and compassion.[1] Dante responded to the interest, or something more, which this lady evinced. Her sympathy fell gratefully upon his wounded and solitary spirit, and the regard with which he evidently inspired her, her own personal attractions, combined with a certain resemblance to Dante's dead lady, like whom, she wore on her features "love's own hue," moved him to transfer to this new object his now loosed allegiance, and to make her the subject of his verse. In short,

> "She pitied him, and loved him,
> And he loved her that she did pity him."

With sentimentalists, this transfer of a love which had for so long a time formed the central point of Dante's existence, and was to be the lode-star of his future life, will doubtless detract

[1] It has been conjectured, with much probability, that the lady in question was the Monna Gemma Donati, who ere long became Dante's wife. The Casa Donati closely adjoined the house of the Alighieri, and its windows could probably command a view of the latter. Dante, indeed, here speaks of his passion for this fair and compassionate lady as of short duration and already a thing of the past; still, it may well have been a mere temporary cessation of this new love, caused by the reaction of feeling which Dante describes, during which the *Vita Nuova* was written.

somewhat from the interest of his character. It would, however, be both shallow and unjust to accuse him on account of it of levity or inconstancy. The poignant sorrow which continued to oppress him for a year or two after Beatrice's death is sufficient proof of the depth and truth of his attachment. Nor is it of rare occurrence, or difficult of explanation, that upon the loss of the beloved object a void is created, which nature seeks to fill up as best may be. In bringing about this result, which, far from necessarily implying any forgetfulness of, or infidelity to, the former ties, may even proceed in great measure from the acuteness with which the loss consequent upon the severance of those ties is felt, both physiological and psychological causes take part. Moreover, none can say how often the second love may be a Laodamia's image of the first; how often the lesser light which arises upon the night of bereavement may but shine by reflection from the day-star which has set; the melody may be but a *nachhall* caught from strings formerly set vibrating; the sparse primroses of the later year may grow from a root which has blossomed more richly in the spring of life.

So it was with Dante's second love. Akin to

Pity, and the child of Fancy by Memory, it soon betrayed how little power it had to displace, or to obscure for long, the image of that incarnation of all good which the *benedetta Beatrice* had been, and was to be, to him. His temporary aberration soon gave rise to a remorse so keen that even the strictest of Love's votaries might well admit that *più gran delitto men vergogna lava*. Beatrice again appeared to him in vision, clad, this time, in the robe of crimson ("that most noble of colours," as Dante had well called it) which she wore when she first won his childish love. A severe struggle between the new love and the old ensued, but it was short, and the old emerged triumphant. Then again came to him a "marvellous vision of that Blessed One," which, however, he refrains from describing, "until he shall be capable of treating of her more worthily." To this object he solemnly dedicates the labour of his life; and with a prayer to be worthy of eternal union with his glorified lady, ends, as with a solemn organ voluntary, this Hymn to the Christian Eros.

The *Vita Nuova* was probably written soon after the last events recorded therein. Some, indeed, have assigned it to the year 1300, that year of Dante's great moral regeneration, in

which he sets the action of the *Commedia*. That year was, indeed, a solemn one for all Christendom. The first Jubilee had been proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII., and vast numbers of pilgrims flocked to Rome from all Europe, there being daily in Rome 200,000 strangers, besides those going and returning. Accordingly, Dante's mention of the pilgrims in c. xli., and of the reflections to which the sight of them gave rise in his mind, has been adduced in support of their theory by those who refer the composition of the book to the year of the Jubilee, when great troops of pilgrims would be passing through Florence daily. The very passage in question, however, is opposed to the theory which it is adduced to support. Dante saw the pilgrims "at that time when many folk were going to behold the blessed likeness which," etc., etc. Now, had these pilgrims been on their way to the Jubilee, it is most improbable that Dante would have failed to make some mention, at the least, of the main object of their pilgrimage, so great and solemn as the occasion was, instead of merely referring to one of the minor incidents of it. Indeed, the words of the text are at least as applicable to any year as to that of the Jubilee, it being customary to exhibit the

Vera Icon every January, Holy Week and Ascension Day.

Moreover, it is improbable that amid such stormy political events as those which marked the year 1300, and in which the poet himself bore so active a part, he should have been engaged upon a work of so calm and contemplative a character as the *Vita Nuova.*

Moreover, the reproaches addressed by Beatrice to Dante in the Earthly Paradise indicate that he had then (1300) been guilty of *repeated* acts of infidelity to her memory, and had for some time past led a life which was to say the least not wholly immaculate, although it might, and probably would, be most unjust to attribute to him any very grave delinquencies. This, however, is wholly inconsistent with the concluding chapters of the *Vita Nuova.*[1] There, after a single, and very venial, offence

[1] See *Purgatorio*, c. xxxi., where, further, Beatrice speaks of *repeated* visions and monitions, whereby she sought to recall Dante to his pristine faith, but in vain. Now, in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante speaks of only one such warning vision, which was immediately efficacious. Hence we must infer that Dante's return to his allegiance was but temporary, and that he fell away again and again, until, later on in life, he finally emerged from the *selva oscura* inhabited by warring passions.

against his voluntary allegiance, Dante, with a passion of grief and remorse far greater than the occasion required, returned without reserve to his pristine fidelity.

Hence we can only infer, or rather it is clear almost beyond inference, that the *Vita Nuova* could only have been written at that season when the angel consideration had come to Dante, and further that such season was of but temporary duration, for even Dante had to fall, and rise, and fall again, and rise again, before he could reach the summit of that purgatorial mount which has to be climbed on this side Styx.

Of course, the foregoing remarks concerning the date of the *Vita Nuova* can apply only to the work in its completed form. The book consists of a prose narrative, thickly interspersed with lyrical poems illustrative of the different stages of the history. These lyrics are of earlier date than the prose portion of the work, having been written at the time of the incidents recorded in them, and although it is not at all improbable that Dante, when collecting these poems and arranging them in due order, may have revised and corrected them to a certain, even a considerable, extent we cannot

doubt that they are substantially the same as when written. The work is a curious mixture of passion and method, characteristic both of Dante's own nature, and of the times in which he lived. To us, it appears strangely incongruous to find introduced into the story of a love at once so passionate and so transcendental a calm discourse upon poetics, and a dissertation upon the mystical system of numbers closely following upon the impassioned lament on Beatrice's death. Still more incongruous are the commentaries which are attached to each of the lyrics, wherein the poem is deliberately dissected, distributed under distinct heads in accordance with the nature of the subject, and the purport, literal and esoteric, scientifically analyzed. Interesting as these commentaries are from a historical point of view, it is irritating in the extreme, after reading one of these exquisite lyrics, palpitating with life, the new-born offspring of the author's emotions, to find it, as it were, straightway cut to pieces, weighed and measured, tied up in parcels, and ticketed, often with a most inappropriate label. This passion for subtle analysis, and minute, often arbitrary, distinction, is the most characteristic feature of all the

intellectual work of the middle age, and Dante, though belonging to all time, was the quintessence of his age. Cold-blooded as may seem, at first glance, the application of this critical method to matters of the emotions, yet is this view far from being the true one. Such matters were deemed to be among the great verities of human nature, and, as such, to be worthy of the patient and scrupulous investigation which truth demands. All thought was intensely vital; all things pertaining to man were considered in their relation to the spirit of man, and to the Spirit from which that spirit was derived, and however crude, and even puerile, the results of mediæval thought might be, herein is it most favourably contrasted with that dilettante pseudo-scientific spirit which has done so much towards transforming modern poetry and fiction into superficial treatises upon, and sham analyses of, the principles of religion and ethics, sociology and psychology.

Not only in date is the *Vita Nuova* the work of Dante's youth. Its essence and structure alike mark it as the product of what may be termed, the receptive period; a period to which belong the earlier works of all young poets, even, or especially, of the most original. Such early

works, though they may be essentially original, though they may even constitute a new departure in the history of letters, yet teem with reminiscences and imitations, conscious or unconscious, of their predecessors, alike in outward form, and in thought, imagery, diction and innumerable details. A new life has been born into the world, but its steps need support for a while.

So it was with Dante. The very framework of the *Vita Nuova*, in its alternation of prose and verse,[1] and its frequent employment of

[1] It must, however, be remembered that the same form appears in the romantic literature of the Middle Ages, e.g., "Aucassin and Nicolette," and in the ancient Celtic literature. Indeed, it seems probable that modern literature, prose and verse, in form and matter, owes to Celtic literature a vastly greater debt than has ever been acknowledged. It is customary to ascribe to Arab influences such features of the mediæval lyric poetry, the chivalric spirit it embodies, the love of nature it evinces, its novel metres, etc., as cannot be directly traced to classic or Teutonic sources, to the Saracens, who so long maintained their footing in Provence. Such features, however, are at least as distinctive of Celtic as of Oriental romance, and considerable as the Arab influence upon mediæval letters undeniably was, it may be doubted whether the Celtic influence, first, during the great period of Irish culture in the Carlovingian age; secondly, in the great Welsh revival of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, to which so great a part of the romance of chivalry may be traced, were not even more deep and extensive.

visions as part of the poetic machinery, is that adopted by Boethius, in his treatise *De Consolatione.* Now at the time when we suppose the *Vita Nuova* to have been written—about 1293-4—it was this very work of Boethius in which Dante found at once solace for his grief, and an entrance into the world of classical literature.[1]

Still more thoroughly is the work pervaded by the influences of that mediæval literature with which Dante was so deeply imbued. Instances enough have been adduced in these pages, and many more might be cited, to show the readiness with which Dante, in common with all other great and original writers, such being as assimilative as they are creative, would avail himself of the labours of his predecessors. The very language in which he describes his passion; the tears and plaints, the lamentations over imaginary griefs, nursed by self-pity into realities; the silent worship of his mistress, and the persistent concealment of her name; the choosing of another lady to serve as a "screen"

[1] This treatise of Boethius played an important part in the nascent literature of England as well as of Italy. King Alfred's translation of it into Anglo-Saxon is, with that monarch's other translations, the first specimen of Anglo-Saxon prose literature.

to his actual love, the incident of the eaten heart in the first vision;—all these, and many more, are characteristic of the Provençal Troubadours and their Italian imitators, from whose works Dante copied them with an almost childlike *naïveté*.

Regarding Dante's literary style in the *Vita Nuova*, we are unable to exclude the recollection that it was probably the first, certainly almost the first, attempt at artistic prose composition in the Italian, and are thus struck with a certain air of maturity, wherein it differs widely from the first rude essays of the early French, English and German writers. The style, however, no less than the matter, bears the note of youth, the youth both of the author and of his native speech, which, even in his hands, has not yet reached that perfect development to which Italian prose was so soon to attain. Born an infant Hercules, and capable of great feats in its very cradle, it had yet to grow in strength and stature before all its labours could be accomplished. Even the verse, although, as is natural, far more mature than the prose, is wanting in that perfection of "finish," which betrays the craftsman possessed of both acquired and inherited experience.

But though unable to boast of any great polish or artistic finish, the style is not unworthy of the matter. It has a *naïve* charm and beauty of its own, an exquisite simplicity alike in thought and diction. Its pathos is graceful and touching in the extreme,[1] while on the rare occasions when the author would express a happier mood,[2] the narrative goes singing on its way in a bright and limpid flow, like a mountain brook in sunlight. Pity it is that such moods are of so rare occurrence and so brief duration, for the general note is "a most humorous sadness," which, at any rate in the portions of the work treating of the early stages of Dante's passion, when his sorrows proceed from no graver cause than somewhat fantastical love-longings, dims, in some degree, its beauty.

All works, indeed, of a purely emotional character, labour more or less under this drawback. No amount of beauty or genius in such a book will save the reader from a certain impatience at being perpetually tossed upon a weltering flood of sentiment, blown up by sighs, and exposed to an unceasing rain of tears. The gusty passion of Boccaccio's

[1] See especially cc. xxii., xxiii., xxxii. (Canzone), xxxv.

[2] See especially cc. xxiv., xxvi.

Fiammetta,—the sentimentality of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*,—the everlasting *Empfindsamkeit* of Jean Paul Richter and the German Romanticists, all afflict us, in the midst of our admiration, with a certain feeling of weariness, almost of disgust. Even a smaller admixture of the like defects will suffice to alloy the charm of Petrarch's sonnets and Heine's *Lieder*. Dante, it is true, is preserved from this reproach, in its graver forms, as well by the strength and elevation of his own genius, as by the very structure of his work, whose clearly defined outline, terse and direct treatment, and simple genuineness, permit no great divagations, and sustain the interest of the narrative.

Yet even here the same fault is apparent, though in a mitigated form, and if we knew no more of Dante than what he himself discloses in his plaintive love story, we might be excused from regarding with something approaching to contempt so lachrymose a swain, who, by his own showing, passes the best years of his life in bewailing a hopeless passion. The remembrance, however, that he upon whom we would pass this hasty judgment is not merely one of the three supreme poets of all time, but one who stood among the foremost of his day in scholarship, theology, philosophy, political and

natural science, while he took part in the active life of his time as soldier, statesman, politician and *littérateur*, should give us pause, and cause us to take thought how far those characteristics which strike upon us so unpleasantly pertain to the very essence of Dante's genius, and how far (to employ a term which would have recommended itself to him) they inhere therein *per accidens* merely.

Now, it is very certain that however deep and heartfelt a man's emotion may be, the particular form in which that emotion finds expression is almost as much a matter of circumstance, determined by the conventions of the society in which he lives, as is the dialect in which he writes. The fashion of this outward vesture of the emotions, as it may be called, is always set in great measure, at any rate in the more cultured classes, by the tone of the romantic literature for the time being in vogue; and although such literature, in the first place, undoubtedly reflects, while heightening, traits actually existing in the society wherein it takes its rise, still, when come to maturity, it establishes a conventional etiquette of emotion which cannot fail to influence, however unconsciously, each individual.

This love language of sighs and tears, plain-

ings, and lamentings, is a distinctive note of the imaginative literature of the Middle Ages. In the Romances of Chivalry, we find knights-errant and Paladins—who think no more of cleaving a few giants to the chine (that mysterious part, so conspicuous in chivalric anatomy), or of routing a Paynim host single-handed, than Hotspur would of killing half-a-dozen Scots before breakfast—passing the intervals of leisure between their feats of prowess, in the most dolorous wailings over their mistresses' cruelty, while the smallest access of joy or grief in the course of their love will suffice to overcome them, even to swooning. In real life, no less, the men of blood and iron, who wrought out the history of the Middle Age, could roar you as gently as any sucking dove, when hit by the blind archer, and strove, not unsuccessfully, to realize in practice the wildest extravagancies related of their favourite horses of romance.[1] Yet more lamentable lovers were the singers of the *Langue d'Oc*, with a melancholy as baseless

[1] Witness the whole history of the mediæval *Frauendienst*, culminating in the extraordinary lunes of the famous Ulrich von Lichtenstein, a knight-errant at least as mad as Don Quixote himself, without the excuse of the latter's noble aspirations and illusions.

and fantastic as that of Don Quixote, as humorous and complex as that of Jaques, their verses, in great measure, filled with languorous complaints or with quibbling, pseudo-scholastic dissertations upon love and beauty.

Surely, then, far from impeaching the truth of Dante's passion, or the manliness of his character, on account of certain superficial blemishes, the inevitable result of surrounding influences, we should rather recognize that strong originality—even in this his earliest work—and that truth and depth of feeling, which enabled him to wear the garb of sentimentality—a Nessus skirt, so generally fatal to all life which it enfolds—so lightly as not greatly to hamper the free play of his genius, or to veil its beauty.

Hitherto we have dealt, chiefly, and, as may appear to many, at too great a length, upon that for which Dante was more or less indebted to others. Only from a perusal of the work itself can we gather what was more peculiarly his own, and his is everything which constitutes the very spirit and substance of the whole. Other poets had already sung their loves in verses rich with melody and imagery; others had revered, in the person of the beloved, a

moral beauty, of which the outward beauty was but the appropriate raiment; others had portrayed a love which endures beyond the grave; a few had even re-discovered Plato's teaching, that all earthly beauty is as a glass wherein the lineaments of the divine beauty are darkly visible. It was reserved for Dante, however, to actualize these vague perceptions, and to make the Platonic ideal the vital principle of his life and of his work. In the Phaedrus, Plato tells how the human soul, fallen from its native heaven to earth, the pinions of its winged coursers all torn and shattered by the fall, lies dazed and helpless, until the aspect of some earthly beauty remind it of its celestial home, the divine fount of all beauty. Then is life newly kindled, and the plumes of its coursers begin to shoot anew; until, strengthened by the contemplation of the divine good thus incarnate in an earthly object, it is again fit to essay its heavenward flight. So it was with Dante. Although the beauty of his lady's person sufficed to fill him with an ecstasy of reverential awe (for all this is implied in his word *umiltà*), yet was this physical beauty the mere expression of the spiritual and celestial beauty of which she was the abode or the symbol:

which of the two, or whether both, we cannot tell.

Suffice it, that she presented herself to his imagination as the point wherein centred all the qualities which make up human perfection, as the personification of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest . . . whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely." Thus it was but meet that Beatrice should be loved for herself, and independently of any return she might make for the love bestowed upon her. "If I love thee, what is that to thee?" And the love thus founded could not die with the earthly form of its object, but the tie between them must needs become a Jacob's ladder set up from earth to heaven,—whereon angelic passengers—human prayers and aspirations, celestial monitions and consolations were continually ascending and descending.

Yet, ideal as was Dante's love for Beatrice, it was none the less real; it was the love of a man for a woman, a love, indeed, most pure, but also most strong and heartfelt. Of this, innumerable passages in the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convito* and the *Commedia* will leave no doubt in any who come to the perusal of them with a mind unbiassed by theories. Still, it is passing

strange how great a fire was kindled by so small a spark as the meeting of the nine-year-old Dante with the eight-year-old Beatrice; and although, as we have already seen, a child-love so early, yet so genuine, is by no means unexampled, it is surely cause for wonder that upon a meeting with Beatrice, when grown to woman's years, this love should have been renewed, and that no discordance should have been found between the actual woman and the ideal of Dante's childish dreams. Nor can we choose but marvel, when we find that this love of Dante's maturer age, which dominated his life for seven or eight years, and deeply influenced it to the very end, appears to have been nourished only by the unsubstantial food of looks and glances, with the interchange of an occasional greeting.

Possibly, however, this strangeness is more apparent than real. There are many ways of love, and herein, as in so many other things, extremes are apt to meet. The love "engendered of the eye, by gazing fed," which owes its origin to mere physical beauty, and is apt, with the generality, to assume the lowest form of passion, may yet, in strongly imaginative temperaments, become the purest and most

exalted. Such temperaments are apt to create their own imagined ideal of perfection, and when any object succeeds in kindling their fancy, they invest such object with all those qualities which properly pertain to their ideal only. If it was so with Dante, as it may well have been, for he was at that age when ideals still seem capable of realization, those very circumstances, which would, in ordinary natures, cause an incipient passion to die away for want of sustenance, may have actually contributed with him to the permanence of his passion, by obviating the possibility of that disillusioning effect which closer acquaintance may so readily produce,—save in those rarest cases of elective affinity where each half of the primal androgynous being has found its proper mate,—when jarring notes will occur to mar the harmony, or, at least, the strings will be let down to a pitch more suited for the calmer music of domestic life.[1]

[1] It is remarkable that Dante never gives utterance to the slightest aspiration to the hand of Beatrice—and any lower form of passion is wholly inconceivable here—while his language, before Beatrice's death, keeps, for the most part, at an equable level of desponding melancholy and unrest, never rising to hope, nor sinking to passionate despair. This, however, may be explained,

It is hardly necessary to discuss the theories of those commentators who have seen in Beatrice an allegorical personage only, typical of Theology of the Holy Roman Empire, of Italy, or what not. Their speculations, ingenious as they often are, are signal instances of the powerlessness of the utmost learning and acumen to preserve their possessor from error, when they have once received a fatal bias towards some preconceived theory. We may be very sure that Beatrice was neither an allegorical personage, nor the arbitrarily chosen object of an artificial and merely poetical devotion. Whoso should doubt of this, after an attentive perusal of Dante's own writings, must either be strangely involved in the meshes of his own theory, or else yet more strangely ignorant of human nature and the language of human passion. Dante must be interpreted,

either by Beatrice failing, from the very first, to return his love, or, which seems far more probable, from disparity of fortune putting their marriage out of the question. Thus Dante may have attained to that qualified blessing proverbially assigned to those who expect nothing, and if his love brought him but little happiness, he was, at any rate, saved from the disappointment caused by hopes frustrated, or the yet more grievous disappointment which often attends upon hopes fulfilled.

at any rate as to his primary intent and meaning, by Dante himself, and those who merely seek to read into him the figments of their own ingenuity will find his books like those of Aristotle, "published and not published." They will find that the key to Dante's soul is not to be found by those who look upon him merely as an embodied intellect, and not a man of like feelings and passions with others, living at every pore; and to their interrogations they will meet such answer only as Dante himself gave to the inquisitive Florentines, when he "smiled upon them, and answered—nothing."

VITA NUOVA.

I.

IN that part of the book of my memory prior to which there is but little to be read, there is found a rubric[1] * which saith: *Incipit Vita Nova*— "Here beginneth the New Life." Beneath which rubric I find written the words which it is my intention to copy into this little book, and if not all, at least the sense of them.

II.

Nine times already since my birth had the luminous heaven[1] well nigh returned to the self-same point, in its own revolution, when first appeared before mine eyes the glorious lady of my soul, who was called Beatrice of many, who knew not what it was that they called her.[2] She had then been in this life so long

* The Arabic figures refer to the notes at the end of the volume.

that, in her time, the starry heaven had moved towards the region of the East one twelfth part of a degree,[3] so that she appeared to me at about the beginning of her ninth year, and I beheld her almost at the end of my ninth year. She appeared unto me, clad in that most noble hue, modest[4] and full of dignity—a crimson that is—girt and adorned in such wise as beseemed her very early years. At that moment, I verily say, the vital spirits,[5] which have their abode within the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently as to be felt in my smallest pulses ; and, trembling, I spake these words: *Ecce Deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi* ("Lo, a God stronger than I, who shall come and have dominion over me"). At that moment, the animal spirits, which dwell within the lofty chamber, whereunto all the sensitive spirits convey their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, addressing more especially the visive spirits, spake these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra* ("Now hath thy bliss appeared"). At that moment the natural spirits, which dwell in that region where the nutrition is manifest, began to lament, and, lamenting, spoke these words: *Hen miser! quia frequenter impeditus*

ero deinceps ("Woe's me! for ofttimes shall I be sorely let from henceforth"). From that time forth, I say, love became the lord of my soul, which was thus speedily wedded to him, and he began to assume so firm and so great a dominion over me, by virtue of the power conferred on him by my imagination,[6] that it behoved me wholly to fulfil his every pleasure. Many a time he bade me seek to behold this most youthful angel, so that in my boyhood [7] I would often go about seeking her; and I discerned in her so noble and admirable a bearing, that of her might surely have been spoken those words of the poet Homer:[8] "She seemeth not the daughter of a mortal man, but of God." And although her image, which abode with me continually, emboldened Love to rule over me, yet was it of such notable virtue as never to permit love to direct me, without the faithful counsel of the reason, whensoever it might be well to give ear unto such counsel.[9]

And since the dwelling upon the passions and actions of so youthful a season seemeth like some fabulous story, I will quit them, and passing over many things which might be drawn from the exemplar [10] whence these words take their birth, I will pass on to those words which

are written in greater paragraphs within my memory.[11]

III.

After so many days had passed by, that nine years were just accomplished since the above described apparition of my most gentle one, upon the last of these days, it so happened that this wondrous lady appeared to me, in garments of whitest hue, between two gentlewomen, who were of more advanced age than she. And as she passed by the way, she turned her eyes towards the spot where was I, greatly afraid; and, of her ineffable courtesy, which is now receiving its reward in eternity,[1] she saluted me in virtuous wise, insomuch that methought I then beheld[2] the farthest limits of bliss.[3] The hour that her sweetest greeting came to me, was just the ninth hour of the day,[4] and, seeing that this was the first time that her words had moved towards mine ears, I felt such sweetness, that, like one intoxicated, I departed from among the folk, and, repairing to the solitude of my room, I set myself to think upon this most courteous lady; and, as I was a thinking of her,

a sweet sleep overcame me, wherein appeared to me a marvellous vision.

I seemed to see within my room a flame-coloured cloud, wherein I descried a lordly figure, of an aspect terrible to whoso looked upon him, and he seemed to me so greatly to rejoice within himself that it was a wonder; and in his words he said many things, which I understood not, save only a few, among which I understood these words: *Ego dominus tuus* ("I am thy lord"). Within his arms, methought, I saw a lady asleep, naked, save that she seemed to be lightly wrapped in a robe of crimson hue; and as I observed her full closely, I perceived that she was the lady of the salutation, who had that day already deigned to salute me. And in one of his hands he seemed to hold something, which was all burning, and he seemed to say to me these words, *Ecce cor tuum* ("Behold thine heart"). And after he had tarried there somewhile, methought that he awoke her who was asleep, and so wrought of his will that he made her eat of that which was burning in his hand, the which she ate, as one doubting. After that, there was but small delay ere his joy was turned into most bitter mourning, and thus lamenting, he again gathered up

that lady into his arms, and, as it seemed to me, departed with her to heaven. Wherefrom I sustained anguish so great that my feeble sleep might no longer endure, but was broken, and I awoke. And straightway I began to bethink me, and found that the hour at which this vision had appeared to me was the fourth hour of the night, whereby it is manifest that it was the first of the last nine hours of the night. And as I thought of that which had appeared to me, I resolved to make it known unto many who were famous makers [5] at that time. And as I had already discovered for myself the art of saying my say in rhyme, I resolved to make a sonnet, wherein I might salute all Love's faithful lieges; and, praying them to give their judgments upon my vision,[6] I wrote to them that which I had seen in my sleep: so then I began this sonnet.

SONNET.

Unto every captive soul, and gentle heart, to whose sight these presents shall come, to the end that they may write me back their interpretation thereof, be greeting in the name of their lord, which is Love.

Now was well nigh spent the third hour of

that season when every star gives its light, when Love suddenly appeared to me, the remembrance of whose person awakens horror within me. Cheerful seemed Love, holding in his hand my heart, and in his arms he bore my lady, asleep, wrapped in a loose mantle. Then he awoke her, and made her, all timid and downcast, to eat of that burning heart: then I saw him turn away, weeping.

This sonnet is divided into two parts: in the first part, I tender my greeting, and demand a reply; in the second, I declare that to which a reply is sought. The second part begins here: "*Now was, etc.*"

To this sonnet reply was made by many and in diverse senses, and among them *He*[1] replied, whom I call first among my friends; and he then indited a sonnet which begins: *Vedesti al mio parere ogni valere* ("Methinks thou'st seen a vision of all worth"). And this was almost the beginning of the friendship between him and me, when he knew that I was he who had sent him the sonnet. The true meaning of the said sonnet was not then discerned by any one, but is now manifest to the most simple.

IV.

From this vision forth, my natural spirits began to be impeded in their operations,[1] seeing that my mind was wholly given up to the thought of this most gentle being. Whence, in a little while, I came into so frail and weak a state, that to many of my friends it was a grief to look on me; while many, full of envy, sought to learn of me that which I endeavoured wholly to conceal from all others. But I, understanding the malicious questions which they put to me, answered them even as Love willed—who directed me after the counsels of reason,—"that it was Love which had thus assumed the mastery over me." I spoke of "Love," because I bore in my visage so many of his tokens[2] that they could not be hid. And when they asked me, "By whose means hath Love thus destroyed thee?" I would look on them with a smile, and name to them no one.

V.

One day it chanced that my most gentle lady was sitting in a place where folk were listening to a discourse concerning the Queen of Glory,[1]

and I was in a spot whence I could look upon my bliss. And midway in a straight line between her and me, was sitting a gentle lady of right pleasant aspect. Now this lady looked at me several times, wondering at my gaze, which seemed to rest upon her; and thus many people became aware of her glances. And it attracted so much attention, that, as I left the place, I heard those near me saying, "See how such and such a lady is destroying him." And, as they named her, I understood that they were speaking of her who had sat in the direct line which proceeded from the most gentle Beatrice, and ended in my eyes. Then I took great comfort, assuring myself that my secret had not that day been betrayed to others by my gaze, and straightway I thought of making this gentlewoman serve as a screen to the truth, and I soon made such a semblance, that my secret was believed to be known to most of those who were wont to prate concerning me. With this lady I dissembled for several months and years; and, the better to persuade others, I composed for her several little pieces in rhyme, which it is not my intention to set down here, save insofar as they had to treat of that most gentle Beatrice; and so I will omit them all,

excepting anything that I have written which appears to be in praise of her.

VI.

I say that at the time when this gentlewoman was the screen of so great a love of mine, a desire came to me to record the name of my most gentle one, and to accompany it with the names of many ladies, and especially with that of the lady already mentioned; so I took the names of sixty, the fairest of the city where my lady had been placed by the Lord Most High, and composed an epistle, in the form of a *sirventese*,[1] which I will not set down. Nor would I have made mention of it, but to record the marvellous thing which occurred as I was writing it; namely, that in no other order could my lady's name be made to stand save ninth among the names of the other ladies.

VII.

The lady by whose means I had so long concealed my desire, was now obliged to leave the

before named city, and to go into a distant country, for which cause I was dismayed at the loss of so excellent a defence, and was more discomfited than I myself could have believed beforehand. And deeming, if I spake not somewhat dolorously of her departure, people would the sooner detect my dissimulation, I proposed to make some lamentation in a sonnet, which I will transcribe; seeing that my lady was the immediate occasion of certain words in the sonnet, as is apparent to him who understands. So then I indited this sonnet.

SONNET.[1]

O ye, who pass along Love's way, rest ye, and see if there be any sorrow, grievous as mine; and, I pray you, deign but to hearken unto me, and then picture to yourselves how I am all sorrow's inn[2] and key.

Love, not soothly for my slight worthiness, but of his own nobleness, set me in a way of life so pleasant and so sweet, that often, erstwhile, have I heard folk say behind me, "Ah, for what worthiness beareth he so light a heart?" Now have I lost all my confidence, which drew its being from out Love's treasury, so that I am left destitute, in such wise that

there cometh over me a fear to speak thereof. And therefore, fain to do even as they, who, for very shame, disguise their penury, I show an outward cheerfulness, while within my heart I waste and weep.

This sonnet has two principal parts; for in the first I mean to call upon Love's faithful subjects in the words of Jeremiah the prophet.[3] O vos omnes, qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte, si est doler sicut doler meus, *and to beseech that they would deign to hear me. In the second, I tell where Love had set me, with other meaning than that which the latter part of the sonnet discloses;*[4] *and I tell what I have lost.*

The second part begins here: "Love, etc."

VIII.

Soon after the departure of this gentlewoman, it pleased the Lord of Angels to call to his glory a lady, young, and of right pleasing aspect, who had dwelt in the before named city, full of grace; whose body I saw lying, bereft of the spirit, in the midst of many ladies, who were weeping very piteously. Then, remembering to have seen her in company with my

most gentle one, I could not refrain from shedding a few tears; and thus weeping, I determined to say some few words anent her death, in recompense for her having been sometime seen with my lady. And upon this I touched somewhat in the last part of the lines which I indited thereon, as manifestly appears to whoso understands them. So then I indited these two sonnets, the first whereof begins, "Weep, lovers;" and the second, "Thou caitiff Death."

SONNET I.[1]

Weep, lovers, for Love weepeth, hearing what cause he hath to weep.

Love heareth certain ladies crying for pity, betraying by their eyes the grief that is within; for caitiff Death has wrought his cruel handiwork upon a gentle heart, laying waste all that the world can praise in a gentle lady, save honour only.

Hark ye, what great honour Love did pay her; for I saw him in his proper guise, weeping over her winsome dead form; and ofttimes looked he up to heaven, where that gentle soul had found her place, who had been a lady of so cheerful a mien.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I call upon, and entreat, all Love's faithful subjects to mourn, and tell them that their Lord mourneth; and that, hearing the cause of his mourning, they should the more dispose themselves to hearken unto me; in the second, I relate the cause; in the third, I tell of a certain honour which Love conferred upon this lady. The second part begins, "Love heareth;" and the third, "Hark ye."

SONNET II.

Thou caitiff Death, pity's foe, old mother of grief, tyrannous sentence without appeal:—for that thou hast given cause to my sorrowing heart to go so heavily, the tongue groweth weary in reproaching thee. And, lest haply thou wouldst beg for grace, it behoves me to tell of thine offence, wrongful beyond all wrong; not, indeed, that it is hid from men, but so as to stir up ruth in each one who hath been wont to make Love his daily bread.

Courtesy hath fled the world, and virtue, which is to be prized in women; in the midst of joyous youth hast thou destroyed these lovely charms. Who this lady is I will not reveal, save by her well-known qualities.

Let none who meriteth not salvation, hope ever again to have fellowship with her.

This sonnet is divided into four parts. In the first, I call upon Death by certain of his proper titles; in the second, addressing him, I declare the cause which moves me to reproach him; in the third, I revile him; in the fourth, I turn me to some person not defined, though defined so far as suits my own intention. The second part begins, "For that thou;" the third, "And lest haply;" and the fourth, "Let none."

IX.

A few days after this lady's death, a matter occurred which obliged me to leave the above named city, and to go towards those parts where abode the gentlewoman who had been my screen, though my destination was not so far distant as the place where she was. And although I was in the company of many persons, as might be seen, yet was my departure so unpleasing to me, that hardly could my sighs disburden my heart of the anguish which it felt, in that I was leaving my bliss behind. So then my sweetest lord, who ruled

me by virtue of that most gentle lady, appeared before me in the guise of a pilgrim,[1] lightly clad, and in vile raiment. He seemed to me to be troubled, and bent his gaze upon the earth, save that at times, methought, his eyes would turn towards a fair river, rapid and most clear, which flowed beside the road wherein I was. And I thought that Love called to me, and spake to me these words:—"I come from that lady who has long been thy screen, and I know that thou wilt never find her more; and so that heart which I made thee have by her, I have with me, and bear it to a lady who shall be thy screen, as was the other"—and he named her name, so that I knew her—"but nevertheless, if of these words which I have spoken unto thee thou shouldst repeat any again, speak thou in such manner that none may detect thereby the feigned love which thou hast hitherto professed towards this lady, and must henceforth profess towards another." And after he had said these words, this my vision suddenly disappeared, for the most part—for it seemed to me that Love gave me of his own substance[2]—and, with altered visage, I rode on that day, deep in thought, and companioned with many sighs. At the end of that day I began the following sonnet.

SONNET.

As I was riding along a certain road, some days agone, musing upon my journey, which pleased me ill, I met Love midway, clad in a light pilgrim's weed. He seemed to me downcast of mien, as though he had lost lordship; and he came on, sighing, deep in thought, with head bent down, that folk might not gaze upon him. When he espied me, he called to me by name, and said, "I come from a far-off place, where thine heart abode, according to my will; and I bring it again, that it may serve a new delight." Then took I into myself so much of him,[3] that he vanished, without my knowing how.

This sonnet has three parts. In the first, I relate how I found Love, and how he appeared to me; in the second, I tell what he said to me, although not fully, for the fear I had of discovering my secret; in the third, I say how he disappeared. The second begins, "When he espied;" the third, "Then took I."

X.

Upon my return, I set myself to seek out that lady whom my Lord had named to me

upon the Way of Sighs. And that my story may be the briefer, I say that in a short time I had made her so completely my disguise, that too many people talked thereof beyond the bounds of courtesy, whereat I was often grievously troubled. And for this reason, namely, on account of that importunate rumour, which, it seems, had basely defamed me, that most gentle one, who was the mortal foe of all vices, and queen of all the virtues,[1] meeting me in a certain place, withheld from me that sweetest salutation of hers, wherein subsisted all my bliss. Wherefore, departing somewhat from the present matter, I would fain give to understand what were the virtuous effects which her salutation wrought upon me.

XI.

I say, that when she appeared from either side, the hope of her admirable greeting left no man my foe, nay, rather, a flame of charity took hold upon me, which made me forgive whoever had offended me; and if, at that moment, any man had asked me aught, my reply would have been merely "Love," with a countenance

clothed in humility. And as she drew nigh somewhat, to greet me, a spirit of Love,[1] subduing all the other spirits of sense, drove forth the enfeebled visive spirits, and said to them, "Go ye, do honour to your lady," and he remained in their place. And whoso had desired to perceive Love, might then have done so, observing the tremor of mine eyes. And when that most gentle lady gave me her greeting, Love was, not to say a protection to me from a bliss beyond endurance, but, as though by excess of sweetness, he became such, that my body, which was wholly under his dominion, would often move like some heavy and lifeless thing. So that it manifestly appears that in her greeting abode my bliss, which many times surpassed and overflowed my strength to bear it.

XII.

Now, returning to my subject, I say that after my bliss was withdrawn from me, so great a grief came over me, that, going apart from all people, I went into a solitary place, to bathe the ground with bitterest tears ; and so soon as

my weeping was somewhat assuaged, I repaired to my room, where I could lament without being overheard; and there, crying mercy of the lady of courtesy, and exclaiming, "Love, help thou thy faithful servant!" I fell asleep, weeping like a beaten child. And in the middle of my slumber, it came to pass, as I thought, that I saw a youth in my room, sitting by my side, clad in whitest apparel, deep in thought, as his aspect betrayed. He was watching me there, where I was lying, and after he had gazed upon me for some time, he appeared to sigh, and to call on me, and say to me, "*Fili mi, tempus est ut prætermittantur simulata nostra*" ("My son, it is time that our feigning be laid aside"). Then seemed I to recognize him, for he addressed me even as he had addressed me in my sleep many a time before. And as I looked at him, he seemed to be weeping piteously, and to be expecting some words from me; whereupon, taking courage, I began thus to speak with him: "Lord of all nobleness, why weepest thou?" And he said unto me these words: "*Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiæ partes; tu autem non sic*" ("I am, as it were, the centre of a circle, to which

the several parts of the circumference bear a like relation; but thou art not so").[1] Then as I pondered his words, he seemed to me to have spoken very obscurely; so I constrained myself to say to him: "What is this, my Lord, which thou sayest to me with so much obscurity?" And he said to me in the vulgar tongue, "Ask not more than is profitable for thee." So then I began to discourse with him concerning the salutation which had been refused me, and asked him the cause thereof, when he replied to me in this manner:

"Our Beatrice has heard from certain persons who were talking of thee, that the lady of whom I spoke to thee on the Way of Sighs has received some annoyance from thee. Wherefore, seeing that in truth thy secret, which hath endured so long, is in some degree made known to her, I will that thou indite certain words in rhyme, wherein thou shalt set down how great a power I wield over thee, through her, and how thou hast been hers, even from thine early childhood;[2] and summon thou, to testify to this, him to whom it is known, and bid him tell it her; and I, who am he, will gladly discourse with her thereof; and hereby shall she perceive thy desire, perceiving which,

she will understand what was said by those dupes. Let these words be as it were an intermediary, that thou mayest not speak to her directly, which is not seemly. And send them not without me to any place where they might be understood by her, but make them to be adorned with sweet melody, wherein will I be present, at all times when occasion shall require."

And having spoken these words, he vanished, and my slumber was broken.

Now, when I came to reflect, I found that this vision had appeared to me at the ninth hour of the day. And before I left my room, I resolved to make a ballad, wherein I might fulfil the commands which my Lord had laid on me; and I made this ballad.

BALLAD.[3]

Ballad, I would have thee find out Love, and go with him into the presence of my Lady, that so may he plead with her my defence, which thou shalt sing. Thou goest, my ballad, with so courteous a mien, that even uncompanioned thou mightest well have confidence, in every place; yet, if thou wouldst be

secure in thy going, find out Love first; for it is not well, I trow, to go apart from him: for she, who is to give audience to thee—if, as methinks, she is angered with me—might lightly show thee contumely if thou wert not accompanied by him.

With sweet melody, when thou art with her, begin these words (so soon as thou shalt have craved her grace):—"My lady, he who sends me to you is wishful, if it please you, that you give ear to me pleading his defence. Love it is who, by your beauty's aid, makes him to change his looks at will. Then think you not since Love has made him look upon another, that his heart is therefore changed." Say to her, "My lady, his heart is stablished with so confirmed a faith, that his every thought prompts him to serve you: right early was he yours, and never hath he gone astray."

But if she will not believe thee, bid her call Love to witness, who knoweth the truth thereof. And lastly, put up an humble prayer to her, to pardon this thing if it do irk her. Let her even send a message bidding me die, and her servant's obedience shall be seen. And say thou to him who is all pity's key,[4] before thou leavest my lady's presence,—that he may

deign to plead my good cause—"For guerdon of my sweet notes, remain thou here with her, and discourse concerning thy servant even as thou wilt; and if, for thy prayer's sake, she shall pardon him, make her to proclaim peace by her fair semblance towards him."

My gentle Ballad, if so it please thee, go with such speed that honour may be thine therefor.

This ballad is divided into three parts; in the first, I tell it where it must go, and exhort it, that it may go with the better courage; and say whose company it should seek, if it would go securely, and without any danger. In the second, I show that which behoves it to make known. In the third, I give it leave to go when it will, commending its going to the arms of fortune. The second part begins, "With sweet melody;" the third, "My gentle Ballad." Haply one might allege against me, that he could not tell to whom I was speaking in the second person, for the ballad is nought else than the words which I speak. And so, I say, I mean to solve this doubt, and to make it clear in a yet more doubtful part of this book.[5] *And then he who doubts, or desires to contradict me, will in that way come to understand.*

XIII.

After the vision I have just narrated, when I had indited the letter which Love bade me write, I began to be tossed and vexed by many and diverse thoughts, and almost irresistibly so by each. Among which thoughts there were four which more especially disturbed the repose of my life. One of them was:—"Good is Love's lordship, in that it withdraws his liegeman's mind from all base things."[1] The second was:—"Love's lordship is not good, inasmuch as the greater faith his faithful liegeman keeps with him, the more grievous and sorrowful moments must he pass." The next was:—"The name of Love is so sweet to hear, that it seems to me impossible for his effect, in most things, to be aught else than sweet; seeing that names follow the things named, as it is written, *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum.*"[2] The fourth was this:—"The lady, through whom Loves urges thee so, is not like other ladies, that her heart may be moved readily." And by each of these thoughts was I buffeted so sore that I stood like one who knows not by what path to take his way, who would fain go, yet knoweth not which way he should go.[3] And if I sought to find a middle course between

them,—a course, that is, wherein they might all concur,—such a course was one right grievous to me, it being to call upon Pity, and to throw myself into her arms. And as I stayed in this pass, the desire came to me to write certain rhymes; and I then indited this sonnet.[4]

SONNET.

My thoughts all speak to me of Love; and have so great a variance among themselves, that one makes me desirous of his dominion; another discourses loudly, concerning his worthiness; another hopefully, bringeth me delight; another makes me to mourn repeatedly; and they agree in nought but craving pity, all trembling with that dread which is within mine heart.

Wherefore know I not what course I should adopt; and I would fain speak, but I know not what to say: thus do I find myself in Love's labyrinth. And if I would make accordance with all, it behoves me to call upon her who is mine enemy, my Lady Pity, to defend me.

This sonnet may be divided into four parts. In the first, I assert and propound that all my thoughts are of Love; in the second, I tell how they are diverse, and declare their diversities; in the third,

I show wherein they all seem to accord; in the fourth, I say that when I would fain speak of love, I know not from which of them to take my theme, and if I would take it from them all, it behoves me to call upon mine enemy, my Lady Pity. I say, "my Lady," as in a wrathful manner of speech. The second part begins, "And have so great;" the third, "And they agree;" the fourth, "Wherefore know I not."

XIV.

After the battle of my conflicting thoughts, it chanced that my most gentle one came where many gentle ladies were met together; to which place I was brought by some friendly soul, who thought to do me great pleasure by bringing me to a spot where so many ladies were displaying their beauty. Whereupon, not knowing whereunto I had been brought, and confiding in him who had brought his friend even unto life's extreme, I said to him, "Why have we come among these ladies?"

Then he replied, "To see that they be meetly served." Now sooth is that they had assembled in order to attend upon a lady who had been espoused that day; and so, according to the custom of the before named city, it behoved that they should bear her company the first

time she sat at table in the house of her new husband.[1] Wherefore, thinking to give pleasure to my friend, I resolved to stay and wait upon these ladies, in company with him.

Now as soon as I had thus resolved, I perceived a strange trembling,[2] which began to make itself apparent in the left side of my breast, and quickly spread to all parts of my body. Then, I say, I dissembled, and leant over towards a painting which ran round about that house; and, fearing lest others should remark my trembling, I raised my eyes, and, looking towards the ladies, saw amongst them the most gentle Beatrice.

Then were my spirits so distraught, by the power which Love acquired on seeing himself in so close proximity to that most gentle lady, that there was no life left in me, save in my visual spirits,[3] and even they were banished from their organs, for that Love would fain take up his rest in their most noble seat,[4] in order to gaze upon that admirable lady. And although I had become other than my wonted self,[5] yet was I grieved for those spirits, for they lamented bitterly, and said:

"Had he[6] not thus hurled us forth, we might have abode, and beheld this marvel of a lady, even as abide the other spirits, our peers."

I say that many of those ladies observed mine altered semblance, and straightway marvelled at it, and began to talk and to laugh at me, together with my most gentle one; wherefore my friend, perceiving this, took my hand right faithfully, and, leading me out of these ladies' sight, asked me what ailed me.

Then, after that I had rested me awhile, and my deadened spirits had revived, and they that had been banished had returned to their habitations, I said to this friend of mine:

"I have set my feet in that part of life, beyond which none may go, who looks to return again."

And quitting him, I retired to the chamber of tears,[7] where, weeping and ashamed, I said within myself: "Had my lady but known of my condition, methinks she would not thus have mocked at mine aspect; nay, I rather believe that she would have been touched with pity therefor."

And as I stood thus lamenting, I resolved to indite somewhat, wherein I might show the cause of mine altered semblance, and might affirm that I knew it was not comprehended, for had it been, I believe that others would have been moved to pity. And this I purposed to say, hoping that it might haply come unto her

hearing. So then I indited the following sonnet.

SONNET.

Lady, you join with other ladies in mocking at my mien, and think not wherefore it comes to pass that my visage presents to you so unwonted a cheer, whenever I look upon your beauty. If you but knew it, pity would not suffer that I should be put any longer to the wonted proof; for Love, when he finds me near you, putteth on so great an arrogance, and so great confidence, that he smiteth among my trembling spirits, and slayeth this one, and driveth out that, so that he alone remains to gaze upon you; so that my face is transformed as it were into that of another, yet for all that, I still feel well the sorrows of my banished and tormented spirits.

This sonnet is not divided into parts, because a division is only made in order to open up the sense of the thing divided; wherefore, it being made sufficiently clear by the foregoing discourse, it needs no division. True it is, that amid the words wherein is explained the occasion of this sonnet, some doubtful saying may be found; that is, when I say that Love slayeth all my spirits

and the visive spirits remain alive, but outside their proper organs. And this uncertainty is incapable of solution by any one who is not in the like degree Love's liegeman; and to those which are, that is plain which these doubtful sayings seek to resolve: and, therefore, it is not well that I should explain such ambiguity, seeing that my words would be either in vain, or else superfluous.

XV.

After this strange disfigurement,[1] a strong notion took hold upon me, and seldom left me; nay, it rather kept continually recurring to me, and spake to me in this wise:—

"Since thou puttest on so ridiculous a mien when thou art near this lady, why dost thou ever seek to behold her? If, now, she were to ask thee, what wouldst thou reply? supposing that thou hadst all thy faculties unimpeded, whereby thou mightest reply to her."

And to this replied another thought, an humble one, which said:—"If I had not lost my faculties, and were free to make reply, I would tell her, that so soon as my imagination

calls up her wondrous beauty, so soon cometh over me the desire to look on her, the which is of such strength, that it slays and destroys everything which could rise up in my memory against it; and so my past sufferings in no wise withhold me from seeking the sight of her.

And so, moved by such thoughts as these, I resolved to indite somewhat, wherein, excusing myself to her from such a reproof, I might set forth all which cometh to me in her presence. And I indited the following sonnet.

SONNET.

Every thought I meet with in my mind dies, whenso I gaze upon you, fair joy; and when I am near to you, I hear love say, "Fly, if death be irksome to thee." My face betrays the hue of my heart, which, fainting, findeth what stay it can; drunk, as it were, with the greatness of its dread, so that the very stones seem to cry out, "Die, die!"

He sinneth, who, seeing me then, doth nought to comfort my soul in its dismay, if only by showing that he is touched with ruth for me,—for pity's sake, slain by your mockery,[2] —pity, which is born of the deathlike look of mine eyes, whose desire is for death.

This sonnet is divided into two parts; in the first, I declare what cause I have for not abstaining from approaching my lady; in the second, I say what cometh to me, through approaching her; and this part begins here, "And when I am near to you." And moreover this second part is divided into five, according to five different things which I relate. For in the first, I tell what Love, counselled by reason, says to me when I am near her; in the second, I portray the state of my heart, as testified by my visage; in the third, I tell how all my confidence diminishes; in the fourth, I say that he sins who shows no pity for me, that I might have some comfort thereby; in the last, I say why one should have pity on me, even for the piteous look which cometh into mine eyes; the which piteous look is destroyed, that is to say, it is unmarked of others, through my lady's mockery, who draweth to do the like those who, perhaps, would perceive that piteousness. The second part begins, "My face betrays;" the third, "Drunk, as it were;" the fourth, "He sinneth;" the fifth, "For pity's sake."

XVI.

Soon after that of which I have spoken, this sonnet aroused within me a desire to say somewhat further, wherein I might declare four other things concerning my case, which, it seemed to me, I had not yet made clear. The first of which things is, that I ofttimes suffered grief, when my memory prompted my fancy to depict what Love had done to me. The second is that Love would ofttimes assail me with such vehemence, that nought of life remained within me, save one thought only, which spoke to me of my lady. The third is, that when I was so sore bestead in this conflict of Love, I would betake myself, all my colour fled, to look upon my lady, thinking that the sight of her would save me from that combat, forgetting what always befell me upon drawing nigh to so noble a creature. The fourth is, that not only did the sight of her succour me not, but it even discomfited the little of life that yet remained to me. And so I indited this sonnet.

Sonnet.

Full often times there recurs to my mind that darkened aspect[1] which Love bestows upon

me; and such a pang comes over me, that I say, right oft: "Ah woe! did ever the like come to any other?" For Love assails me suddenly, in such wise that life well nigh forsakes me; and one only of my spirits doth he save alive, and that one remains because it holds discourse of you. Then I constrain myself—eager to obtain relief—and so, half dead, and destitute of all resource, I come to gaze upon you, hoping to find my cure; and if I raise up mine eyes to look on you, so great a trembling begins within mine heart,[2] as to make the soul desert its pulses.

This sonnet is divided into four parts, according as there are four things narrated therein; and since they have been discussed above, I will concern myself no farther than to distinguish the parts by their beginnings. So, I say, the second part begins, "For Love;" the third, "Then I constrain;" the fourth, "If I uplift."

XVII.

After I had composed these three sonnets, wherein I held converse with my lady,—for they were the narrators of well nigh my whole

condition—I thought it well to keep silence, seeing that I had disclosed myself sufficiently. And although I constantly refrained from addressing her, it becomes me to enter upon a new matter, and one more noteworthy than the foregoing. And since the occasion of this new matter is pleasant to hear, I will recount it, as briefly as I may.

XVIII.

It followed that many persons had learnt, from my looks, the secret of mine heart, and several ladies, who were met together, enjoying one another's society, knew my heart, each of them having been present on many occasions of my discomfiture. And as I was passing by them, as though by fortune's guidance, I was called by one of these gentle ladies; and she who had called to me was of right fair speech. So when I had come into their presence, and saw that my most gentle lady was not among them, I took courage, and, saluting them, asked what was their pleasure. There were many ladies present, and among them some that laughed between themselves. Others there

were who looked towards me, awaiting what I should say. Others there were talking among themselves, one of whom, turning her eyes towards me, and addressing me by name, spake these words :—

"To what end lovest thou this lady, seeing that thou canst not bear her presence? Tell us; for surely the purport of such a love deserves to be most widely known."

And having spoken these words, not only she, but all the rest likewise, set themselves to await my reply. Then spake I these words unto them :—

"Ladies, the object of my love was formerly the greeting of that lady, whom, doubtless, you have in mind; and therein consisted the bliss which was the end of all my desires. But since it has pleased her to withhold it from me, my lord Love, of his beneficence, has set all my bliss in that which can never be diminished."

Then began these ladies to speak among themselves, and, even as we sometimes see the rain fall mingled with fair snow, so did I seem to hear their words commingled with sighs. And after they had held converse among themselves somewhile, the lady who had first accosted me went on to say :—

"We pray thee, tell us wherein this bliss of thine consists."

And I spake in this wise:—

"In those words which proclaim my lady's praise."

And she replied:—

"If thou spakest true, thou wouldst have fashioned in other sense those words which thou hast written, in order to make thy condition known."

Wherefor, pondering over these words, I left them, as though ashamed; and went, saying within myself, "Since so great bliss there is in those words which tell my lady's praise, why has my speech ever been of aught else?"

Wherefore I determined for ever thereafter to take as the subject of my speech something which should be in praise of my most gentle one; and musing much thereon, meseemed that I had taken upon me a matter which was too high for me, so that I dared not begin; and so I remained for some days, longing for utterance, yet fearing to begin.

XIX.

After which, it chanced that as I was passing along a road, beside which ran a stream with clearest waves, I was seized with so great a desire for speech that I began to muse what fashion I should take; and it seemed to me, that it became me not to speak of her, save by addressing ladies in the second person; and not every lady, but such as were gentle women, and not women merely. Then, I say, my tongue spake as though it were moved of itself,[1] and said, *Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore* ("Ye ladies, who possess intelligence of Love"). These words I stored up in my mind with great joy, thinking to take them for my beginning. Then I returned to the above-named city, and after meditating for some days, I began a Canzone[2] with this beginning, ordered in the manner which will be made visible below, in the division of it. The Canzone begins thus :—

Canzone.[3]

Ye ladies who possess intelligence of Love, I would fain discourse with you concerning my lady, not that I may fully rehearse her praise, but that by discourse I may unpack mine heart.[4]

I tell you that when I muse upon her worthiness, Love enters so sweetly into my thoughts, that, did not my courage wholly fail me at such times, I would, by my speech, move all men to love.

Now I wish not to discourse in so high a style that I should become caitiff from fear,[5] but I will treat of her noble condition,—slightly, indeed, with respect to her—with you, O noble dames and damosels, for no matter is it whereof to talk with others.

An angel[6] calleth to the Divine Intelligence, saying :—

"Lord, there is seen on earth a miracle in act, proceeding from a soul whose radiance mounteth up even unto this place. Heaven, which hath no other want, than to possess her, begs her of its lord, and every saint cries aloud for this boon."

Mercy alone defends our cause, for God saith, (who knoweth my lady well) :—

"My beloved, suffer ye now that the object of your hope tarry there, so long as it shall please me, where one there is who looks to lose her; and who will say unto the ill starred ones in Hell, "I have beheld the hope of the blessed!"[7]

My lady is desired in high Heaven; now would I teach you to know what virtue is hers. I say, let every she, who would appear a noble lady, go with her; for wherever she goes, Love casts a frost upon all churlish hearts, so that their every thought perishes and dies; and everything which he should suffer to abide the sight of her, would become noble, or else would die; and whensoever anyone is found worthy to behold her, he doth prove her virtue; for there cometh to him that which giveth him weal, and renders him so meek that he forgets all offence.[8] Moreover, God hath bestowed on her this further grace, that none can come to an ill end who hath spoken with her.

Love saith of her:—

"How can mortal thing be so fair, so pure?"

Then he looks upon her, and swears within himself that it is God's purpose to make of her some new thing.

Hers is a hue like pearl, so far as is comely in a lady, but not beyond measure;[9] she is compact of all good that nature can make; by her, as paragon, is beauty judged. From her eyes, whensoever she moves, spirits issue forth, fired with love, which strike upon the eyes of him who then looks on them, and pass through, so

that each one of them reaches the heart. You see Love depicted in her smile, whereon none can keep his gaze firmly bent.

My song, I know that thou wilt go, and parley with ladies many, when I shall have adorned thee: now do I warn thee—for I have brought thee up as Love's own daughter, youthful and simple,—that where thou lightest, thou shalt say, beseechingly:—

"Teach me my way: for I am sent to her with whose praises I am bedight."

And if thou wouldst go not as one who goeth in vain, abide thou not where churlish folk be; bethink thee, if thou canst, to be open only with a courteous dame or man, who will put thee in the speedy way.

Thou wilt find Love, and her with him; commend me to them, as is thy devoir.

That this Canzone may be the better understood, I will divide it with greater art than those that have gone before, and therefore I make three parts of it. The first part is the proem to the words that follow; the second is the entire treatise; the third is, as it were, ancillary to the words that go before. The second begins, "An angel calleth;" the third, "My song, I know." The first part is divided into four: in the first I say to whom I wish to speak

concerning my lady, and why I wish to speak; in the second, I say how her worthiness appears to myself when I think thereon, and how I would speak, did I not lose my courage; in the third, I say how I think fit to speak, so that I be not hindered by mine abjectness; in the fourth, again saying to whom I speak, I declare the reason why I speak to them. The second begins, "I say that;" the third, "Now I would not;" the fourth, "With you, O lovely dames."

Then, when I say "An angel calleth," I begin to treat of my lady; and I divide this part into two. In the first, I say how she is esteemed in heaven; in the second, how she is esteemed on earth, beginning, "My lady is desired." This second part is divided into two: for in the first, I speak of her so far as relates to the nobility of her soul, narrating somewhat of her virtues, which proceed from her soul; in the second, I speak of her so far as relates to the nobility of her body, narrating somewhat of her beauties, beginning, "Love saith of her." This second part is divided into two; for in the first I speak of certain beauties which pertain unto her whole person; in the second, I speak of certain beauties which pertain unto a determinate part of her person, beginning, "From her eyes." This second part is

divided into two; for in the first I speak of her eyes, which are the beginning of love; in the second, I speak of her mouth, which is the end of Love.[10] *And that every vicious thought be far removed from hence, let him who readeth call to mind that it is written above, that my lady's greeting, which was the work of her mouth, was the end of my desires, so long as I might receive it.*

Finally, when I say, "My song I know," I add a stanza, ancillary, as it were, to the others, wherein I declare that which I require of my song. And because this part is easy to understand, I trouble not myself with more divisions. Truly I admit that it would be well, the more fully to open up the sense of this canzone, to adopt more minute divisions; howbeit, whoso is not of sufficient understanding to comprehend it by means of those already made, it irks me not though he should e'en let it bide; for, in sooth, I should fear to have communicated its sense to only too many, even by those divisions which are now made, if so it were that many could understand it.

XX.

After this Canzone was somewhat spread abroad among folk, it came to pass that a

friend of mine, having heard it, was moved with a desire to pray me that I would tell him what Love is, entertaining, perchance, from what he had heard, a hope of me higher than my deserts. And so, thinking it well that after such a treatise, I should treat somewhat of Love, and also deeming it right to oblige my friend, I determined to indite somewhat, wherein I might treat of Love; and thereupon I indited this sonnet.

SONNET.

Love and the gentle heart are one single thing,[1] even as the Sage[2] declares in his lay; so that the one without the other would come nigh to be as the rational soul without reason.[3]

Nature maketh them both, when she is in loving vein;—Love, for the heart's lord, the heart for his mansion, wherein he reposes, sleeping,—sometimes for a little while, sometimes for a long season. Then Beauty appeareth, in the person of some virtuous lady, which is so pleasing to the eyes, that a desire is born within the heart for that which giveth pleasure:[4] and then it abides therein so long, that it arouses the spirit of love. And the like is wrought with a lady by a worthy man.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I speak of him (i.e. Love) in so far as he subsists potentially ; [5] *in the second, I speak of him in so far as from potency he is reduced to actuality. The second begins, "Then beauty."*

The first part is divided into two : in the first, I show in what subject this potency subsists ; in the second, I declare how this subject and potency are together reduced to actuality, and how the one hath such respect to the other as form to matter. The second begins, "Nature maketh them."

Then, when I say, "Then Beauty," I show how this potency is actualized ; and, first, how it is actualized in a man, then how it is actualized in a lady, as here, "And the like, &c."

XXI.

After I had treated of Love in the aforesaid rhymes, the desire came to me to say somewhat further in praise of my most gentle one, wherein I might show how this love for her awoke, and how not only did she awake him when he was sleeping, but how, further, where he was not even potentially, she wrought in such wondrous wise as to make him come. And then I indited this sonnet.

SONNET.

Within her eyes doth my lady bear Love,[1] whereby she ennobles all that she looks upon; wherever she passes, each one turns towards her, and the heart of him whom she greets is moved to trembling; so that, bending down his face, he faileth utterly, and straightway sighs for all his sins; before her pride and wrath flee away: help me, ye ladies, to do her reverence.

All sweetness, every humble thought, is born in the heart of him who heareth her accost him; wherefore blessed is he who is the foremost to behold her.

What her semblance is when she smiles a little, none may tell, nor retain in memory, so strange a miracle is that gentle creature.

This sonnet has three parts. In the first, I say how my lady reduces that potency into actuality, so far as pertaineth to that most noble part of her, the eyes; and in the third I say the same, so far as pertaineth to that most noble part, the mouth.[2] *And between these two parts is a little part, which is, as it were, a suppliant for aid, to the preceding part and the following, and begins here,* "*Help me, ye ladies.*" *The third begins,* "*All sweetness.*

The first is divided into three; for in the first I tell with how great virtue she ennobles that which she looks upon; and this is as much as to say how she brings Love into potency, there where he is not. In the second, I tell how she reduces Love into actuality in the hearts of all them upon whom she looketh. In the third, I tell of that which she afterwards works with so great virtue within their hearts. The second begins, "Wherever she passes;" the third, "And the heart." When I say afterwards, "Help me, ye ladies," I give it to be understood to whom it is my intention to speak, by summoning those ladies to help me in honouring her. Then when I say, "All sweetness," I say the same thing as is said in the first part, but relating to two actions of her mouth; one of which is her sweetest speech, and the other her marvellous smile; save only that I say not concerning this last, how it works upon the hearts of others, for the memory cannot retain it, nor yet the virtue of it.

XXII.

After this, not many days had passed by, when (as it pleased our glorious Lord, who refused not to take death upon Himself) the

father of so great a marvel as that most noble Beatrice was seen to be, departed this life, and passed to that glory which is truly eternal.

Wherefore, seeing that such a parting is grievous to those who are left behind, and have been friends of him who departeth—and that none so close a friendship is there, as that of a good father to a good son, and of a good son to a good father ; and that my lady was good in the very highest degree of goodness, and her father (so many believe, and so it truly is) was good in a high degree—it is manifest that my lady was filled with the most bitter grief. And as, according to the usage of the above-named city, women are wont to assemble together with women, and men with men, at such time of mourning, many ladies assembled there where my Beatrice was weeping piteously ; wherefore, observing several ladies returning from her, I heard them speaking of my most gentle one, how she was lamenting. Amid the which talk, I heard them say :—

" In sooth, she weepeth so, that whoso beheld her might well die of pity."

Then these ladies passed by ; and I remained in grief so great that my face was bathed with tears, for which cause I hid myself, by many

times placing my hands before mine eyes. And had it not been that I waited to hear further concerning her (I being in a place by which were passing most of the ladies who were leaving her house), I would have gone and hidden myself straightway when the tears had surprised me. But as I tarried yet awhile in the same spot, other ladies passed near me, who were talking among themselves, and saying :—

"Which of us can ever be glad again, after hearing this lady speak in such piteous wise?"

After them, other ladies passed by, who said as they came along :—

"Yon man who is hard by, weeps neither more nor less than if he had seen her as we have."

Then others said of me :—

"Lo, how he seemeth not the same man, so greatly is he changed."

And thus, as these ladies were passing by, heard I them discoursing of her and of me, even as I have said. And taking thought thereon, I resolved to indite something, even as I had good cause to do, wherein I should bring together all which I had heard these ladies say. And as I would fain have questioned them, could I have done so without reproof, I chose

such fashion of speech as though I had questioned them, and they had replied to me. And I made two sonnets; and in the first I put my questions in that wise in which desire prompted me to question them; in the second, I relate their reply, taking that which I had heard them say, as though they had said it in reply to me. And I began the first, "Ye who do bear;" the second, "Art thou he?"

SONNET I.

Ye who do bear so lowly a cheer, your downcast eyes betraying sorrow, whence come ye that your hue seems changed to pity's likeness? Have ye beheld our lady, with her visage bathed in loving tears? Tell me, ladies, for so mine heart tells me, for I see you go with no ignoble mien.[1] And if ye come from so great a sorrow, please you to abide here with me somewhile, and do not hide from me, how it is with her; for I see that your eyes have wept, and I see you come with such altered cheer that mine heart trembles to see this much.

This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I call and ask these ladies if they come from her, telling them that I think it, because they return as though ennobled. In the second, I

pray them to tell me of her; and the second begins, "And if ye come."

Sonnet II.

Art thou he that hath so often treated of our lady, speaking to us alone? Truly thou art like unto him in voice, but thy face seemeth that of another. And wherefore weepest thou thus from thine heart, so as to infect each one with pity. Hast thou seen her weeping, that thou canst not at all dissemble thy dolorous thoughts? Leave it to us to weep and to go sadly (and he sinneth who shall ever seek to comfort us), who have heard her words amid her weeping. Upon her countenance weareth she a grief so manifest, that she who had seen meet to gaze upon her should have fallen dead before her.

This sonnet has four parts, according as the ladies, in whose persons I reply, held four manners of speech among them. And since these are made sufficiently clear above, I concern not myself with recounting the meaning of the parts, and therefore distinguish them merely. The second begins, "Wherefore weepest thou;" the third, "Leave it to us;" the fourth, "Upon her visage."

XXIII.

Some days after this, it chanced that a part of my body was afflicted with a grievous sickness, whereby, for many days, I suffered the most cruel pain; the which brought me to so great a feebleness, that I must needs abide like those who are unable to move. And on the ninth day,[1] I say, being in intolerable pain, there came to me a thought concerning my lady. And when I had thought on her for some time, I turned me towards my feeble life, and seeing how unstable was its duration, even in good health, I began to lament such misery, within myself. Then, sighing deeply, I said within myself:—

"It needs must be that the most gentle Beatrice shall one day die."

And then so great a dismay came upon me, that I closed mine eyes, and began to labour like one distraught, and to imagine after this wise:—that in the beginning of the wanderings of my fancy, I seemed to see the faces of certain women with dishevelled hair, who said to me:—"Thou shalt even die."

And after these women, there appeared to me certain faces, of diverse aspect, and horrible

to behold, which said to me:—"Thou art dead."

And when my fancy began to wander thus, I came to such a pass that I knew not where I was; and I seemed to see women with dishevelled hair pass on their way, weeping, and wondrous sorrowful. And methought I saw the sun darkened, so that the stars showed themselves of such a hue as to make me deem that they were mourning, and the birds seemed to fall dead in their flight, and there were great earthquakes.[2]

Then marvelling at such a vision, and greatly afraid, I fancied that I saw a certain friend, who came to me, and said:—

"What! knowest thou not? Thy wondrous lady hath quitted this world."

Then began I to weep right piteously; and not only in imagination did I weep, but I wept with mine eyes, bathing them in real tears.

I fancied that I was gazing up to heaven, and meseemed I saw a multitude who were going up on high, and bare among them a little cloud of purest white; and the angels seemed to be singing gloriously, and methought the words of their song were these: "*Hosanna in excelsis.*"[3] And nought else did I seem to hear.

Then thought I that my heart, wherein was so great a love, said to me :—

"True it is that our lady is lying dead."

And then, I thought, I went to look upon the body wherein that most noble and blessed soul had dwelt. And so strong was mine errant fancy, that it showed me my lady, dead; and it seemed as though ladies were covering her head with a white veil; and her face wore a look of so great humility that she seemed to be saying:—

"I am to behold the source of peace."[4]

And in my vision, so great abasement fell on me at the sight of her, that I called upon Death and said, "O sweetest Death! come to me; and be not grudging to me; for surely thou shouldst be courteous, having taken thee such an abode![5] Come now to me, for I desire thee greatly: thou seest that I already wear the colours of thy livery."[6]

And when I had seen all the sad offices, which are rendered, of usage, to the bodies of the dead, fully discharged, I returned to my room, and, as it seemed, looked up to heaven; and so strong was my phantasy, that, weeping, I said in my natural voice:—

"O fairest soul, how blessed is he who beholds thee!"

And as I said these words, with a bitter sob of grief, and called on Death to come to me, a lady, young and gentle, who was by my bedside, thinking that my tears and my words were a plaining for the pain of my sickness, began to weep, in great fear. Whereupon other ladies who were in the room, perceived, by the lament which she made, that I was weeping; and making her leave me (which lady was very near of kin to me) they drew nigh to me, in order to wake me, thinking that I was dreaming, and said to me:—

"Sleep no more, neither be distressed."

And as they spoke to me thus, my strong phantasy ceased, just as I was about to say:—

"Oh, Beatrice, blessed be thou!"

And I had already said, "Oh, Beatrice!" when, rousing myself, I opened mine eyes, and saw that I had been deceived; and although I uttered that name, my voice was so broken with sobs and tears that those ladies could not understand me. And although I was greatly ashamed, yet, in obedience to a certain admonition of Love, I turned me towards them.

And when they saw me, they began to say:—

"He is like unto one dead;"—and one to another:—

"Let us strive to comfort him."

So many words they spake to comfort me, and then they asked me, of what had I been afraid? So I, being somewhat comforted, and having now understood that deceitful phantasy, answered them:—

"I will tell you what has befallen me."

Then, beginning with the beginning, I told them all that I had seen, even unto the end, only keeping silent as to the name of my most gentle one. After which, being healed of that sickness, I resolved to indite some words concerning that which had befallen me, thinking that it would be a right lovely thing to hear: so I indited this canzone thereon.

CANZONE.

A compassionate lady, young of age, and fully adorned with all manner of human gentleness, was there when I was continually calling upon Death. As she beheld mine eyes, full of piteousness, and listened to my vain babble, she was moved with fear to loud weeping; then other ladies, who were made heedful of me by her who was weeping with me, made her depart, and drew near to me, so that I might hear them.

One said, "Weep not;" and one said, "Why

art thou so disconsolate?" Then I quitted my strange phantasy, calling upon my lady's name.

So sorrowful was my voice, and so broken with pain and tears, that I alone heard my lady's name within my heart; and love made me turn towards them, with a look all full of shame, which straight came into my face. Such was my hue to look upon, that it made them all discourse of death.

"Ah, let us comfort him!" one besought the other in lowly wise; and full often did they say:—

"What hast thou seen, that thou hast no courage left?"

And when I was a little comforted, I said:—

"Ladies, I will tell it you.

"While I was thinking on this frail life of mine, and perceived how slight a thing was its duration, Love wept within mine heart, wherein he abode; whereby my soul was so dismayed, that, sighing, I said in thought:—

"'It must surely be that my lady shall die.'

"Then fell I into so great a confusion, that I closed mine eyes, which were oppressed with terror, and my spirits were so dismayed, that each one went wandering forth. And afterwards, in my phantasy, which was devoid of conscious-

ness and of truth, there appeared to me the troubled countenances of certain women, who said unto me:—

"'Surely thou shalt die! thou shalt die!'

"Then saw I many things of doubtful import, in that vain phantasy into which I had come; and methought I was in I know not what place, and saw women go their way, dishevelled, one weeping, and one uttering long-drawn wailings, the which shot out fiery darts of sorrow.

"Then I seemed to see how, little by little, the sun became troubled, and the stars appeared, and he and they were weeping; the birds dropped down in their flight through the air, and the earth trembled; and a man appeared to me, with colour fled, and with gasping breath, and said:—

"'What dost thou? knowest thou not that thy lady is dead, which was so fair?'

"Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, like a rain of manna,[7] the angels returning upward toward heaven; and they had a little cloud in front of them, behind which they were crying, *Hosanna!* and if they had said aught beside, I would tell it you.

"Then said Love:—'I hide nothing more from thee; come, and look upon our lady as she lies!'

"The deceitful phantasy led me to look upon my dead lady; and when I had espied her, I saw ladies covering her with a veil; and she wore on her so true a humility, that it seemed as though she said:—

"'I am at peace.'

"I became so humble in my sorrow, beholding in her so perfect a humility, that I said:—

"'O Death! I hold thee exceeding sweet: henceforth shouldst thou be a right gentle thing, seeing that thou hast made thy rest within my lady, and thou shouldst have pity, and not disdain. So, I come, so wishful to be of thine own, that, in faith, I am like unto thee.[8] Come, for mine heart calleth thee.'

"Then I departed, when all the mourning was ended; and when I was alone, I said, looking toward the realm on high:—

"'Blessed, O fair soul, is he who beholdeth thee!'"[9]

"Then you called me,—thanks be yours therefore."

This canzone hath two parts; in the first, addressing some person undefined, I relate how I was roused by certain ladies from a vain phantasy, and how I promised to recount it to them; in the second, I tell how I recounted it to them. The

first part is divided into two: in the first I tell what certain ladies, and what one alone, said and did during my phantasy, in so far as it was before I had returned to full consciousness; in the second, I tell what these ladies said to me, after I had quitted this frenzy; and it begins here, "So sorrowful was my voice." Afterwards, when I say, "While I was thinking," I tell how I related this phantasy of mine to them; and concerning that I make two parts. In the first, I relate this phantasy in order; in the second, saying at what time they called me, I thank them in conclusion; and this part begins, "Then you called me."

XXIV.

After this vain phantasy, it chanced one day, that as I was sitting musing in a certain place, I felt begin a trembling at the heart, even as though I had been in my lady's presence. Then, I say there came to me a vision of Love; so that, methought, I saw him coming thence where my lady dwelt, and he seemed to say cheerfully within mine heart:—

"Bethink thee to bless the day whereon I possessed thee, even as thou shouldst do."

Then, verily, I seemed to have so glad a heart, that I felt as though, in this its new condition, it were no heart of mine. And a little after these words, which my heart said to me, with Love's tongue,[1] I saw a lady come towards me, who was of famous beauty, and was, in sooth, the lady of this my foremost friend. And this lady's name was Giovanna,[2] but, by reason of her beauty, as some think, folk had given her the name of Primavera (Springtide), and so she was called. And then, as I looked towards her, I saw the wondrous Beatrice draw nigh. These ladies came close by me in this wise, the one after the other; and meseemed that Love spoke within mine heart, and said:—

"That foremost lady is named Primavera solely for the cause of her this day's coming; for I moved him who conferred this name upon her to call her Primavera; that is to say, *prima verrà* ('she shall come foremost') on the day when Beatrice shall manifest herself, after her liegeman's vision. And if thou wouldst also consider her first name, that is as much as to say 'Primavera,' her name, Giovanna, cometh from that Giovanni (John) who preceded the true Light, saying:—*Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini* ("The voice of one

crying in the wilderness; 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord').”

And after he had spoken these words, he seemed to say further:—

“He who should consider subtly, would call your Beatrice, 'Love,' for the great resemblance she beareth to me.”[3]

Whereupon, taking thought, I purposed to write in rhyme to my chiefest friend (keeping silent as to certain words which seemed meet for silence), deeming that his heart still regarded the beauty of that gentle Primavera.[4] And I indited this sonnet.

SONNET.

I felt awaken within mine heart a spirit of Love, which was sleeping: and then I beheld Love, approaching from afar off, so cheerful, that I hardly knew him; saying:—

“Now bethink thee to do me honour.”

And at each word of his he smiled.

Then, while my Lord was abiding with me for a little space, I looked thitherward whence he came, and beheld Monna Vanna and Monna Bice coming towards the spot where I was; the one marvel following after the other: and,

even as my mind telleth me again, Love said to me :—

"This one is Springtide (Primavera), and that is Love, so greatly doth she resemble me."

This sonnet hath many parts; the first of which tells how I felt the wonted tremor[5] awaken within mine heart, and how it seemed that Love appeared to me, of good cheer, from afar; the second tells how Love seemed to speak to me within mine heart, and how it seemed to me; the third tells how, after he had tarried with me thus for some while, I saw and heard certain things. The second part begins, "Saying, 'Now bethink thee;'" the third, "Then, while my Lord." The third part is divided into two; in the first, I say what I saw; in the second, I say what I heard; and this begins, "Love said to me."

XXV.

Now a doubt might here arise in the mind of one who deserved to have all his doubts resolved; namely, he might doubt concerning the manner in which I speak of Love as if it were a thing *per sè*, and, further, as if it were not only an intellectual substance, but even a

corporeal substance.[1] Which thing, taken literally, is false; for Love is not a self-existent substance, but is an accident in a substance. Now, that I speak of it as if it were a body, and further, as if it were a man, is evident from three things which I say concerning it. I say that I saw him coming from afar, whence, in that the word "*to come*" signifies local motion (and, according to the Philosopher,[2] body alone is capable *per se* of local motion), it is apparent that I suppose Love to be a body. I say, further, that he laughed, and further, that he spoke, both of which things would appear to be proper to man, especially the capacity for laughter, and hence it is apparent that I suppose him to be a man.

In order to clear up this matter,[3] so far as is fitting for the present purpose, it is to be understood that of old there were no singers of Love in the vulgar tongue; but rather the singers of Love were certain poets in the Latin tongue: among us,[4] that is, I say, although among other nations, there might have been,[5] and although, further, even as in Greece, not popular, but lettered poets treated of these matters. And it is not so many years ago, since first these poets of the vulgar appeared among us; for composing

in rhyme in the vulgar tongue is equivalent to composing in verses in Latin, in some proportion.[6] And a sign that such time is short, is that if we would search in the *Lingua d'oco* and in the *Lingua di si*,[7] we would not find anything written a hundred and fifty years before the present time. And the reason why certain rude folk obtained a reputation for poetic skill, is that they were about the first who composed in the *Lingua di si*.[8] And the first who began to compose as a poet in the vulgar, was moved by the desire to make his words to be understood of his lady, to whom it was not easy to understand verses in the Latin. And this makes against those who rhyme on other matters than those pertaining to love;[9] seeing that such a mode of speech was invented at the first in order to speak of Love. Wherefore, since a greater licence of speech is conceded to the poets than to prose writers, and seeing that these composers in rhyme are nought else than the poets of the vulgar tongue, it is seemly and reasonable that a greater licence of speech be accorded to them than to the rest who speak in the vulgar tongue. Wherefore, if any figure or colour of rhetoric is conceded to the poets, it is conceded also to the rhymers. If, then, we see that the poets have spoken of inanimate things as if

they had sense and reason, and have made them converse together; and not only real things, but also things unreal (that is to say, they have asserted that things speak which are non-existent, and have made accidents speak as if they were substances, and even men);—the rhymers are justified in doing the like, not without any cause, but with such cause as is capable of being explained in prose.[10] That the poets have spoken even as is spoken above, is apparent in Virgil; who says that Juno, that is, a goddess hostile to the Trojans, addresses Aeolus, lord of the winds, here in the first book of the Aeneid; *Aeole, namque tibi*, etc., and that this lord replies to her here, *Tuus, O regina, quid optes*, etc. In this very poet the thing which is not animate speaks to the animate thing, in the third of the Aeneid, here, *Dardanidae duri*, etc. In Lucan, the animate thing speaks to the inanimate, *Multum Roma tamen debes civilibus annis.* In Horace, the man addresses his own art, and not only are the words those of Horace, but he even utters them as the mouthpiece of the good Homer. In Ovid, Love speaks as if he were a human being, in the beginning of the book *De Remedio Amoris.—Bella mihi video, bella parantur, ait.*

And hereby may my book be rendered clear

to any to whom some part of it may give pause. And lest some rude person may take arrogance upon him, I say that neither do the poets speak thus without reason, nor should the rhymers speak thus, not having in themselves power to render a reason for what they say; for great shame would it be to such an one, if aught should be left clad with a robe of rhetorical figures and colours, and he should be unable, when required, to strip his words of such their garb, so that they might bear their true meaning. And this my chiefest friend and I know full many of them that rhyme in such foolish wise.

XXVI.

My most gentle lady, concerning whom I have spoken in what has gone before, advanced so far in the good graces of the people, that, when she passed along the way, the folk would run to gaze upon her; whereat I felt a marvellous joy. And when she drew nigh unto anyone, so great a reverence entered into that man's heart, that he ventured not to raise his eyes, nor to reply to her greeting; and to this

many could testify, of their own experience, to any who should not believe it.[1] She went her way, crowned and clad with humility, betraying no pride for all that she saw and heard. Many would say, when she had passed by, "This is no woman, but rather one of the fairest angels of heaven." Others said:—

"She is a marvel; blessed be the Lord who can do such marvellous works!"

She showed herself, I say, so gentle, and so full of all pleasing qualities, that all who looked on her felt within themselves a noble and sweet delight, such as they could not express; and not one was there who could look upon her but he must needs sigh incontinent. Such and yet more marvellous things proceeded from her in wondrous and virtuous wise. So I, considering this, and fain to resume the theme of her praises, resolved to indite somewhat, wherein I might make her wondrous and excellent virtues known, to the end that not they alone who could see her with the eye of sense, but others too, might know such things concerning her as words have power to declare. Then I indited this sonnet.

SONNET.

So gentle and so noble seemeth my lady, when she greeteth any, that every tongue, faltering, becomes mute, and the eyes no longer dare to gaze. She goes on her way, feeling that she is lauded, clad in the kindly garb of humility: and she seemeth as though she were a creature come from heaven to earth, that she might reveal a miracle. She appears so pleasing to whoso regardeth her, that she sendeth to the heart a sweetness which none who proveth it not may know. And from out her lips there seemeth to move a spirit, sweet and full of love, which enters into the soul, and says, "Sigh!"

This sonnet is so easy to understand, by what has been related before, that it stands in need of no division.

XXVII.

My lady, I say, attained to such grace, that not only was she honoured and commended, but many ladies were honoured and commended through her.[1] And therefore, seeing this, and desiring to make it known unto him who saw it not, I resolved to write something further, in

which this might be made manifest; and so I indited this sonnet, wherein I declared how her virtue wrought upon other ladies.

SONNET.

He sees all blessedness most perfectly, who sees my lady among the ladies; they that do go with her are held of such good grace that they may thank God therefor.

And her beauty hath such perfection that no envy accrues therefrom to others, but it rather makes them go with her, clothed in gentleness, in love and in faith. Her look makes all things humble, and makes not herself alone to appear delightsome, but each one receives honour through her. And so gentle is she in all her actions, that none may call her to mind without sighing, for Love's sweetness.

This sonnet hath three parts; in the first, I say among what manner of folk my lady appears most admirable; in the second, I say how gracious was her presence; in the third, I speak of those effects which she wrought with so much virtue upon others. The second part begins, "*They that do go;*" *the third,* "*And her beauty.*" *This last part is divided into three; in the first, I say what she wrought in the ladies, with regard to*

themselves; in the second, I say what she wrought in them with regard to others; in the third, I say how she wrought, not upon ladies only, but upon all persons, and how, not only by her presence, but when they came to recall her to mind, she wrought in wondrous wise. The second begins, "Her look;" the third, "And so gentle."

XXVIII.

After this, I began one day to ponder over what I had said concerning my lady in the two preceding sonnets, and, while I so thought, perceiving that I had made no mention of the power which at that present time she exercised over me, it seemed to me that I had often spoken of her imperfectly. And therefore I proposed to say certain words, wherein I might declare in what manner I was subject to her power, and in what manner her virtue wrought upon me. And deeming that I could not recount this within the narrow limits of a sonnet, I straightway commenced a canzone, which begins:—

Canzone.

So long hath Love held me enthralled, and tamed to his lordship, that even as he was stern

to me at first, so is he now a pleasant inmate of mine heart. Therefore, when he taketh away my strength, so that my spirits seem to flee away, then doth my frail soul feel such sweetness, that my visage pales at it.

Then Love assumes such power within me that he makes my sighs to come forth in words; and they issue forth, calling upon my lady to augment my bliss. This cometh to me whensoever she looks upon me, and is a thing of such humility as passes belief.[1]

XXIX.

Quomodo sola sedet civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium.[1] ("How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations!")

I was still upon the exordium of this canzone, and had completed the above written stanza, when the Lord of Justice summoned my most gentle one to glory, under the banner of that most blessed queen, Mary, whose name was ever held in the utmost reverence in the speech of my blessed Beatrice.

And although it might, perchance, be pleasing if I were now to deliver some account of her parting from us, it is not my design to treat thereof in this place, for three reasons. The first is, because this would be beyond our present purpose, if we would have regard to the Proem which precedes this book.[3] The second is, that even supposing it did belong to my present design, yet would not my pen suffice to treat of it in such manner as would be worthy thereof. The third is, that, admitting the one and the other, it becomes me not to speak of that, in treating of which I must needs speak in mine own praise (which thing is blameable in the highest degree in him who practises it),[4] and so I leave this matter to another chronicler. Nevertheless, since the number nine has found a place in the foregoing discourse, whence it appears that it is not without significance, and since, in her departing, such number seems to have had great place, it is meet to set down here what pertains to the subject. So I will first say how it bore a part in her passing away, and then I will assign some reason for this number being so much her friend.

XXX.[1]

I say that, according to the usage of Italy, her most noble soul departed at the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and according to the usage of Syria, she departed in the ninth month of the year; seeing that the first month there is Tismin, which is our October. And according to our usage, she departed in that year of our reckoning—that is, in the year of Our Lord—in which the perfect number[2] had been nine times counted in that century in which she was set in our world; and this was the thirteenth century of the Christians.

And this, perchance, may be the reason why this number was her so constant friend; namely, that since, according to Ptolemy,[3] and according to Christian verity, there are nine heavens which move, and, according to the common opinion of astrologers, the said heavens exercise an influence upon the lower world,[4] according to their conjunctions, this number was associated with her, that so it might be understood that at her birth all the nine movable heavens were in most perfect accord.

This is one reason thereof; but considering the matter more subtly, and in accordance with

the ineffable Truth, this number was she herself—I speak by way of metaphor, and this is what I mean. The number three is the root of nine, for, without any other number, when multiplied by itself it makes nine, as we see clearly that 3 × 3 makes 9. If, then, the 3 by itself is the efficient of 9, and the efficient of miracles is the Three of Himself—namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are the Three in One—then was my lady attended by the number nine to the intent that it might be understood that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, the root of which is merely the miraculous Trinity. Perchance some more subtle wit might discern some yet more subtle reason ; but this is what I see therein, and that which pleases me most.

XXXI.

After that most gentle lady had departed from this world, all the aforesaid city was left, as it were, widowed, and despoiled of all worthiness ; wherefore I, still weeping in that desolate city, wrote to the princes of the land concerning the condition thereof, beginning with this

passage taken from Jeremiah: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas.* And I say this, that others may not marvel why I have quoted it above, as an introduction to the new matter which follows thereupon. And if any man should reprove me for not writing here the words which follow those just quoted, my excuse is that it was my desire from the beginning not to write down anything save in the vulgar tongue. Wherefore, the words which follow those quoted being all in Latin, it would be beside my purpose if I wrote them down; and I know that my friend to whom I write had the like intent, namely, that I should write in the vernacular only.

XXXII.

After that mine eyes had wept for some time, and were so wearied that I could no longer find a vent for my sadness,[1] I thought to relieve it by some words of sorrow; and then I determined to make a canzone wherein I might hold lamentable discourse of her for whose sake so great a grief had become the destroyer of my spirit, and I began forthwith: *Gli occhi dolenti.*

In order that this canzone may appear to be left the more completely widowed after its close, I will mark out its divisions before writing it down; and such fashion will I retain henceforth. I say that this piteous little canzone has three parts: the first is the Proem; in the second, I discourse concerning her; in the third, I speak to my canzone in piteous wise. The second begins, "Beatrice hath departed;" the third, "Weep, piteous song." The first is divided into three; in the first, I say what moves me to speak; in the second, I say to whom I would speak; in the third, I say of whom I would speak. The second begins, "And because I remember;" the third, "And I will speak." Afterwards, when I say "Beatrice hath departed," I discourse of her, and thereof I make two parts. First I declare the cause of her being taken away, and then I say how others bewail her departure; and this part begins, "The gentle spirit." This part is divided into three: in the first, I declare who mourneth her not; in the second, I declare who doth mourn her; in the third, I speak of mine own condition. The second begins, "But he hath sadness;" the third, "My deep sighs." Then, when I say, "My piteous song," I address me to this my song, pointing out to it the ladies to whom it shall go, to abide with them.

CANZONE.

Mine eyes, grieving for pity of mine heart, have endured such pains from weeping that they are now all to-spent. Now if I would disburden me of my grief, which little by little is leading me to death, it behoves me to speak, and give a vent to my woes. And because I remember that I gladly spake with you, gentle ladies,[2] concerning my lady, while she was yet alive, I desire not to speak to any other, save to the gentle heart that is in a lady's breast; and I will speak of her with tears, for that she hath betaken herself to Heaven, and hath left Love with me weeping.

Beatrice hath departed to Heaven on high, to the realm where the angels are at peace, and dwells with them, and hath left you, ladies. No frosty attemperature rapt her away, nor heat, as befalleth others, but it was her great goodness alone. For the radiancy of her humility penetrated the heavens with such virtue as to move the Eternal Sire to wonder, so that a sweet desire moved Him to claim so great a blessedness, and He made her to ascend from here below unto Himself, because he saw that this weary life was unworthy of so gentle a creature.[3]

The gentle spirit has quitted her beauteous form, and is glorified in its meet place. He who bewaileth her not, when speaking of her, hath a heart of stone, so malevolent and so base that no kindly spirit can find an entrance therein. His churlish heart hath no so lofty conception that it can imagine aught pertaining to her, and therefore no desire of weeping cometh to him; but that man hath sadness, and mourneth so that he sighs, and fails for grief, and denies his soul all consolation, who sees in thought, but for one single time, what she was, and how she hath been reft away.

My deep sighs give me anguish, when the thought of my burdened spirit reminds me of her who hath cleft mine heart in twain, and oft-times, while I muse on death, there visits me a desire so sweet that it transforms the hue of my visage. When my phantasy takes firm hold upon me, then I am beset on every side with such pangs, that I shudder for the grief which I feel, and I come into such a plight, that shame sends me forth from among folk. Then weeping, and all alone in mine affliction, I cry aloud to Beatrice, and say:—

"What! art thou now dead?"

And even while I am calling upon her I take comfort.

Tears of grief and sighs of anguish lay waste mine heart whensoever I find myself alone; so that it moves ruth thereat in each one that beholdeth. And what my life hath been, ever since my lady betook her into the new world, no tongue is there which could tell; and therefore, ladies mine, for all my will to do so, I could not well tell you of the manner of my being; so am I travailed by my bitter life, which hath become so vile, that each man seemeth to me to say:—

"I give thee up!" seeing my deathlike countenance.

But my lady seeth well what I am, and I yet hope for grace from her therefor.

My piteous song, go now thy way weeping, and seek out the dames and damosels to whom thy sisters were wont to bear delight; and thou, which art the daughter of sorrow, go thou, all disconsolate, to abide with them.

XXXIII.

After I had written this canzone, then came to me one, who, in the degrees of friendship,[1] was, immediately after the first, my nearest friend; and he was so nearly linked in blood to

my glorified lady, that there was none more near of kin to her. And after he had held converse with me, he prayed me to write something for a lady who had died; and he dissembled in his speech, so that it might appear that he was speaking of another; but I, perceiving that he was speaking of none other than that blessed one, said that I would fulfil what his prayer required of me. And so, taking thought, I purposed to make a sonnet, wherein I might lament some deal, and give it to this my friend, so that it might appear as though I had made it for him: and then I said: *Venite a intender*, etc.

This sonnet hath two parts; in the first, I call upon Love's faithful lieges to hearken unto me; in the second, I speak of mine own wretched plight. The second begins, "*Which go.*"

SONNET.

Come ye, and listen to my sighs, O gentle hearts,—for pity wills it—; which go their way disconsolate, and were it not for them, I would die of grief. For that mine eyes would prove rebels to me, oftener far than I could wish,—weary now of mourning thus for my lady —so that mine heart would be smothered with

its moans for her. You would hear them often calling upon my gentle lady, who is gone unto the sphere worthy of her virtues, and at such time setting at nought this present life, showing forth the sorrowing soul, which is forsaken of its bliss.

XXXIV.

After I had composed this sonnet, bethinking me who it was to whom I meant to give it, as though made for him, I perceived how poor and bald a service it seemed to render to one who was so near akin to my glorious lady, And so, before giving him the above written sonnet, I composed two stanzas of a canzone, one, truly, for him, the other for myself, but in such wise that both the one and the other might appear to one who regarded not the matter accurately, to be made for the same person. But every fine observer can well perceive that the speakers are different persons, in that the first does not call her his lady, while the other does so, as manifestly appears. This canzone and this sonnet I gave him, telling him that I *had* made them for him alone.

The canzone begins, Quantunque volte, and has two parts: in the one, that is in the first stanza, this dear friend of mine, her kinsman, makes moan; in the second, I myself mourn, that is in the other stanza, which begins, "Amid my sighs." And thus it is plain that in this canzone two persons lament, the one of whom laments as a brother, the other as a servant.[1]

CANZONE.

How many a time, alas! do I recall to mind that I must never see my lady more, wherefore I go thus sorrowful; and my sad thoughts heap up so great a grief about mine heart, that I say:—

"My soul, why takest thou not thy flight? For the anguish thou must endure in this world, which has become so tedious to thee, makes me to think thereon with great dread. Wherefore I call for Death, as for a sweet and pleasant sleep; and say, 'Come to me,' with so great an affection that I bear envy to each one that dies."

Among my sighs may be heard a piteous voice, which goes calling upon Death continually. Towards him have all my desires turned, ever since my lady was overtaken by his

cruelty; for her loveliness is become a high spiritual beauty, which spreadeth through the heavens a radiancy of love, which greeteth the angels, and moves to wonder even their lofty and subtle intellects,—so noble is it.

XXXV.

Upon that day on which the year was fulfilled since my lady had become one of the citizens of Life Eternal, I was sitting in a place where, calling her to mind, I began to draw an angel[1] upon certain tablets. And whilst I was drawing it, I turned mine eyes, and saw beside me certain persons to whom it behoved me to pay reverence. Now, they were watching what I was doing, and, as I have been told since, had already been there some time before I perceived them.[2] When I saw them, I rose, and, saluting them, said :—

"Someone was with me just now,[3] and therefore was I wrapt in thought."

So when they were gone, I returned to my work, that is, to drawing angels' faces. And while I was working the thought came to me that I should say some words in rhyme, as

though to celebrate her anniversary, and should inscribe them to those who had just come upon me. And then I composed this sonnet, which begins, *Era venuta*, and has two beginnings, so that I will divide it according to both.

I say that according to the first, this sonnet has three parts: in the first, I say that my lady was already in my memory; in the second, I tell of that which love therefore did to me; in the third, I speak of the effects of Love. The second begins, "Love who, etc.;" the third, "They came forth." This part is divided into two; in the one I say that all my sighs issue forth speaking; in the other I tell how some of them uttered certain words diverse from the others. The second begins, "But those."

After the same fashion is it divided according to the other beginning, save that in the first part I say when it was that my lady thus came into my mind, and this I say not in the other.

SONNET.

First Beginning.

Into my thoughts there came that gentle lady, who, for her worthiness, had been set by the

Lord most high in the Heaven of Humility,[4] where Mary is.

Second Beginning.

Into my thoughts there came that gentle lady, whom Love bewaileth, even at that moment when her power made you come and look upon that which I was fashioning.

Love—for in thought he felt her—was re-awakened in my desolate heart, and said unto the sighs :—

"Go ye forth," so that each of them went forth sorrowing.

They came forth from out my breast, weeping, with one single voice, which often brings the tears of woe to my sad eyes. But those which issued forth with most pain came out, saying :—

"O noble spirit ! this day is the year fulfilled since thou hast ascended into heaven."

XXXVI.

Some time after this, being in a place where I called to mind the times that were sped, I was standing right pensively and with such

dolorous thoughts that they made me wear a look of dire dismay. Whereupon, becoming aware of my perturbation, I raised mine eyes to look whether others marked me; and I saw a gentle lady, young and very fair, who, from a window, was regarding me with great pity, as it seemed; so that it seemed as though all pity were in her assembled. Wherefore, seeing that the wretched, when they perceive the compassion of others for them, are the more readily moved to tears, as though themselves had pity upon themselves, I then felt mine eyes beginning to be disposed for weeping, and therefore, fearing to betray the wretchedness of my life, I departed from before the eyes of this gentle being; and then I said within myself:—

"It cannot be, but with this compassionate lady love must be most noble."

And so I resolved to compose a sonnet, wherein I might accost her, and so include therein all that is narrated in this discourse. And since this discourse is sufficiently plain, I will not divide it.

SONNET.

Mine eyes beheld how great a pity had shown itself in your countenance, when you looked

upon the gestures and the posture which Love so often wrought in me.

Then saw I how you thought upon the plight of my darkened life, so that fear entered into mine heart, lest mine eyes should betray mine abjectness. And I withdrew me from before you, feeling that the tears were uprising from mine heart, which was subjected to your gaze. Afterwards said I within my sad soul :—

" Surely with this lady dwells the self-same love as that which made me go weeping thus."

XXXVII.

After this, it so happened that whenever this lady beheld me, she became of a piteous semblance, and a pallid hue, as though for love; wherefore I often called to mind my most noble lady, who had been wont to appear before me of like hue.[1] And certes, being many a time unable to weep, or to disburden me of my sadness, I would go to look upon this piteous lady, who seemed to draw the tears from out mine eyes by her look. And so the desire of speech, and of speech with her, again came upon me, and I indited this sonnet, which begins,

Color d'amore, and is made plain, without division, by the foregoing discourse.

SONNET.

Love's hue and pity's likeness never possessed them of any lady's visage in such wondrous wise, from looking often upon loving eyes and sorrowful plaints, as upon yours, what time you see before you my grievous countenance, wherefore you bring to my mind a matter which makes me greatly to dread lest my heart go astray. I cannot refrain my spent eyes from gazing oftentimes upon you, for the desire they have of weeping ; and so greatly do you increase their proneness, that they are altogether consumed by their desire ; but in your presence, weep they cannot.

XXXVIII.

I came to such a pass by the sight of this lady, that mine eyes began to take too great a pleasure in gazing upon her. So, many a time would I vex myself thereat, and esteem myself a base person enough, and again and again would I curse the vanity of mine eyes, and say to them, in thought :—

"Once were ye wont to move to tears each one who beheld your sorrowful plight; and now it seems that ye would forget all this, for that lady's sake, who taketh note of you, and taketh no note of you save for sorrow of the glorious lady whom ye were wont to mourn; but what ye can do, do ye, for I will call her to your memory, and that right often, ye accursed eyes, for never, until death was past, should your tears have ceased to flow."

And when I had thus spoken within myself with mine eyes, a sighing, most deep and grievous, assailed me. And that this battle which I waged within myself might remain unknown to all, save to the wretch who felt it, I resolved to make a sonnet, and to set down in it this my terrible plight, and I indited the following, which begins, *L'amaro lagrimar.*

This sonnet has two parts: in the first, I speak to mine eyes, even as my heart spake within myself; in the second, I remove a certain ambiguity, by making it manifest who it is that so speaks; and this part begins, "Thus saith." It might well undergo further divisions, but that would be fruitless, seeing that it is rendered clear by the foregoing discourse.

SONNET.

"The bitter weeping which you were used to make, mine eyes, for so long a season, made all people wonder with pity, as you have seen. Now, meseems, ye would forget her, if I, on my part, were so perfidious, as not to thwart your every chance of so doing by reminding you of her, for whom ye were wont to weep. Your lightness makes me muse, and alarms me so that I am in great fear because of a lady's face who looks upon you. Never, save for death alone, should ye forget our lady, who is dead."

So saith mine heart, and then sighs.

XXXIX.

The sight of this lady brought me to so new a condition, that I often thought of her as of one who pleased me only too much; and thus I thought:—

"This is a gentle lady, fair, young, discreet, and haply so ordained by Love, that my life may find some repose."

And many a time I thought of her in yet more loving wise, so that mine heart consented

thereto,—that is, to such my reasoning. And after consenting thereto, I again bethought me, as though moved by reason, and said within myself:—

"Ah! what thought is this, that I would fain find comfort in so base a way, and have no other thought save this?"

Then another thought rose up, and said:—

"Now that thou hast been in such tribulation of love, why wilt not find an escape from such bitterness? Thou seest that this is an inspiration, which calls up love once again, and that the place whence it proceeds is so noble as are the eyes of that lady who has shown herself so compassionate towards thee."

Wherefore, after having often waged such war within myself, I again desired to say certain words; and seeing that, in the war of thoughts, those would conquer which spoke for her, it seemed to me that I should address myself to her; and I indited this sonnet, which begins, *Gentil pensiero;* and I said "gentle," inasmuch as I was discoursing with a gentle lady, though in aught else it was most base.

In this sonnet, I make two parts of myself, according as my thoughts were divided in two. The one part I call heart, that is, "desire;" the

other soul, that is, "reason." And that it is fitting to call the desire heart, and the reason soul, is sufficiently manifest to all those to whom I would wish it to be clear. True it is that in the preceding sonnet I set the part of the heart in opposition to that of the eyes, and that appears contrary to what I say in the present; and I therefore say, that there too I mean "the heart" to stand for "desire," seeing that a yet greater desire was mine again to call to mind my most gentle lady, than was that of looking upon the other, although I had some desire for this, but it seemed a slight one; whence it appears that the one expression is not contrary to the other. This sonnet has three parts: in the first, I begin by telling this lady how my desire all burns towards her; in the second, I tell how the soul, that is, the reason, speaks to the heart, that is, to the desire; in the third, I say how this replies to it. The second begins, "The soul saith;" the third, "The heart replies."

SONNET.

A gentle thought, which speaketh of you, often comes to dwell with me, and discourses of love so sweetly as to win mine heart to consent to it.

The soul saith to the heart :—

" Who is this that cometh to solace our mind ? whose virtue is so puissant as to let no other remain with us."

The heart replies :—

" O brooding soul, this is a fresh spirit of love which brings his desires before me ; and his life and all his might are sprung from the eyes of that pitiful lady, who was so sore vexed at our anguish."

XL.

Against this foe to reason, there arose within me, one day, at about the ninth hour,[1] a strong phantasy ; so that I seemed to behold my glorious Beatrice in those crimson garments in which she first appeared before mine eyes ;[2] and she seemed young, of like age to that in which I first beheld her. Straightway I began to think upon her, and remembering me, after the order of the bygone time, mine heart began to repent right grievously of the desire, by which it had, for some days, so basely let itself be possessed, contrary to reason's firmness ; and, such evil desire now banished, all my

thoughts again returned to their most gentle Beatrice. And I say that from that time forth I began to think of her so, with a heart all full of shame, that my sighs betrayed this, many a time; for in their passage forth, they all well-nigh declared what my heart debated of, that is, the name of that most gentle one, and how she departed from us. And many times it chanced that some thought bare so great a grief within it, that I would forget what it was, and where I was.

By this reawakening of my sighs, my tears, now somewhat assuaged, were re-kindled too, in such wise that mine eyes were like two things which desired nought save to weep: and it often happened that from their long continued weeping, they were surrounded with a purple hue, such as is commonly seen where one has undergone martyrdom.[3] Whence it is apparent that they received the due reward of their vanity, so that from that time forth they could not look upon anyone whose glances had power to seduce them to a like intent.

Therefore, wishful that such an evil desire and vain temptation might be shown to be so utterly extinguished that no doubt could arise from the rhymes which I had previously written, I

determined to make a sonnet which should comprise the substance of this discourse. And then I said, *Lasso per forza*, etc.

I said "Alas!" inasmuch as I was ashamed that mine eyes had so given themselves over to vanity. I do not divide this sonnet, because its sense is sufficiently clear.

SONNET.

Alas! by force of the many sighs which take their birth from the thoughts in mine heart, mine eyes are vanquished, and have no strength to regard any person who looks on them. And such are they become that they are like unto two desires of weeping and of displaying grief, and many time they weep so, that Love encircles them with a crown of martyrdom. These thoughts, and the sighs which I cast forth, become so full of anguish within mine heart, that Love swooneth therefrom, so do they stir his ruth; for these sorrowful ones bear written on themselves that sweet name of my lady, and many words concerning her death.

XLI.

After this tribulation, it came to pass (at that season when many people were going to behold that blessed image, which Jesus Christ left us as an ensample of His most beauteous face,[1] the which my lady beholds in glory) that certain pilgrims[2] were going by a way which leads through the city wherein that most gentle lady had been born, lived and died; and they went, as seemed to me, right pensively. So, as I regarded them, I said within myself:—

"These pilgrims, methinks, are from a distant land, neither have they ever heard tell of my lady, nor know they aught concerning her; therefore are their thoughts set upon other things than her, yea, haply they are thinking of their distant friends, who are unknown to us."

Then said I to myself:—

"If I could but hold them back for a while, I would surely make them to mourn, for I would say to them such words as would move to tears each one that heard them."

Then when they had passed out of my sight, I resolved to make a sonnet, wherein I should set forth all that I had said within myself; and in order to stir up the greater pity, I determined

to speak as though I had held converse with them. Then I indited this sonnet, which begins, *Deh peregrini.*

I said "pilgrims" (peregrini) according to the wider signification of the word; for the word "pilgrims" may be taken in two senses, one wider, and the other narrower. In the wider, in so far as each one is a pilgrim who is out of his own fatherland; in the narrower sense, no one is deemed to be a pilgrim, who is not going to the shrine of St. James,[3] or returning; and therefore it should be known that in three manners are properly named such folk as are travelling on the service of the Most High. They are called "Palmers" (Palmieri) when they go beyond the seas, thither whence they often bring back palm; they are called "Pilgrims" (Peregrini) when they go to the shrine of Galicia, seeing that the shrine of St. James was more distant from his native land than was that of any other apostle; they are called "Roamers" (Romei) when they go to Rome,[4] whither those whom I call "Pilgrims" were going. This sonnet is not divided, because its sense has been sufficiently declared.

SONNET.

Ye pilgrims, treading thus your pensive way,
Dreaming, perchance, of things far otherwhere,
From such a distant country do ye fare,
I pray you, as your semblance seems to say?
For nought at all of sorrow you betray,
As through our sorrowing city you repair,
Like them that, all unwitting, have no care
For that which causeth her so sore dismay.
But deign to pause, and hearken to my rede,
For, sure, the sighs within my breast declare
That then with tears ye would depart from hence:
She mourneth for her Beatrice dead:—
And the discourse men hold concerning her
Hath force to move all hearts to condolence.

XLII.

At this time two gentlewomen sent to me, praying me to send them some of my rhymes; wherefore, bethinking me of their nobility, I purposed to send them some, and to make some new thing, which I would send them with the rest, to the intent that I might the more

honourably comply with their requests. And I then composed a sonnet, which describes my condition, and sent it them together with the preceding sonnet, and with another, which begins, *Venite a intender.* The sonnet which I *then* made is, *Oltre la spera*, etc.

This sonnet containeth five parts : in the first I say whither my thought goes, giving it the name of one of its effects ; in the second, I say why it ascends, and who causes it so to do ; in the third, I say what it sees, namely, an honoured lady. And I then call it "Pilgrim spirit," seeing that it ascends in spirit, and even as a pilgrim, who is beyond his native land. In the fourth, I say how it sees her in such wise, that is, of such quality, that I cannot conceive her ; [1] *that is to say, my thought soars in the quality of her that my intellect cannot comprehend it ; seeing that our intellect stands in such relation to those blessed souls as doth our feeble eye to the sun ; and so saith the philosopher in the second of his Metaphysics ;* [2] *in the fifth part, I say that although my sight cannot attain to where my thought draws me, namely, to her admirable quality, this at least I understand, namely, that such thought is of my lady, because I often find her name in that thought of mine. And at the*

end of this fifth part I say, "Dear ladies mine," as giving it to be understood that they are ladies to whom I speak. The second part begins, "A fresh intelligence;" the third, "When it has reached;" the fourth, "But of my lady's semblance;" the fifth, "But yet I know." It might be divided still more subtly, and be made yet farther understood, but it may pass with this division, and so I do not concern myself to divide it further.

SONNET.

Beyond the sphere, which turns in widest gyres,[3]
The sigh mounts up which from mine heart doth rove;
A fresh intelligence, which weeping Love
Implants in it, its upward ardour fires;
When it has reached the goal of its desire,
It sees a lady, honoured there above,
And the great radiance, which from her doth move,
The pilgrim sprite in wonderment admires.
But of my lady's semblance, when that sigh
Would tell again, my poor heart, fain to hear,—
So subtle its discourse—can nought divine:
But yet I know he tells me of my dear,
For "Beatrice!" is its constant cry,
And so I understand, dear ladies mine.

XLIII.

After this sonnet, there appeared to me a wondrous vision, wherein I beheld things which made me resolve to say no more concerning my Blessed One, until I could treat of her more worthily. And that I may attain unto this, I study with all my might, as she, truly, knoweth. Wherefore, if it shall be the pleasure of Him by whom all things live, that my life shall yet endure for some years, I hope to say concerning her that which has never been said concerning any woman. And then may it please Him who is the Lord of courtesy that my soul may come to behold the glory of its lady, that is, of that Beatrice, blessing and blessed,[1] who in glory looks upon the face of Him, *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus.*[2]

END OF THE VITA NUOVA.

NOTES.

I.

[1] *Rubrica.* The title, head-note, or summary of contents of a book or chapter; so called because in illuminated manuscripts they were generally written in red (Lat. ruber).

II.

[1] *Luminous heaven.* The sphere of the sun, which illumines the universe; the fifth heaven, according to the Ptolemaic astronomy, adopted by mediæval science and theology. For a more detailed account of this system, and Dante's use of it, v. post, c. xxx., and notes thereon.

[2] This passage has led some commentators, and notably the most eminent among them, Dr. G. A. Scartazzini (*Dante-Handbuch*, iii.), to suppose that *Beatrice* was a feigned name, adopted by Dante, after the manner of many singers, to enable him to celebrate his lady's praise, without disclosing her personality. Their point is, why should Dante say that "she was called Beatrice by *many* who knew not what she was called," if Beatrice was her true name? for then she would have been so called, not by *many* only, but by *all.*

Dr. Scartazzini's slightest suggestions are worthy of most profound respect; nevertheless, I cannot but think that in the present instance he has given way to over refinement. Dante's own junior contemporaries are so undoubting in their identification of Dante's lady with Beatrice Portinari, that something more than a mere assumption is necessary to invalidate their assertion. I have, therefore, interpreted this passage as meaning, "She was called Beatrice by many who did not know how appropriate this name was to her," *Beatrice* signifying, "she who blesses, or gives bliss," a signification at which Dante frequently hints, both in the *Vita Nuova* and elsewhere (v. especially *Vita Nuova*, c. xliii., and note thereon; *Convilo* ii. 2. *Quella Beatrice beata, che vive in cielo con gli angeli, e in terra colla mia anima*). The word "*many*," then, would not mean that "many called her Beatrice, being ignorant of her true name;" but, "many called her Beatrice without knowing how fitly she was so called."

[3] In the *Convito* II. vi., Dante states that the heaven of fixed stars, or eighth heaven, moves from West to East at the rate of one hundred years to a degree. Thus the twelfth part of a degree would be eight years and four months.

[4] *Umile, umiltà*, are used in various senses throughout the *Vita Nuova*, to express not only what we generally mean by *humility*, lowliness, etc., but also, and with subtle truth, all that is characterized by gentleness, worthiness, and measured dignity; and even the chastened exaltation proceeding from the surrender of self, and the recipience of ennobling influences from without. See especially the passage pointed out in n. 1 to c. xxviii.

[5] According to the system of physiology current in and after the Middle Ages, and based upon Bl. II. of Aris-

totle *De Gen. An.*, the vital functions of the body, the perceptions, the cogitations, etc., were carried on by means of certain very subtle essences called *spirits*, each of which had its own special domain in the body. Thus, some regulated the blood, others the digestion, others, whose seat was in the brain, the perceptions; and to these last the "sensitive spirits" conveyed the impressions which they had received from the external objects in the peripheral parts of the body.

This theory was fully accepted by many of the most eminent men in science and philosophy, so late even as the latter part of the seventeenth century.

Here, as in many other passages in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante, by a quasi-mythological process, bestows upon these essences, or spirits, a certain dramatic personality. Cp. post cc. iv., xi., xiv.

[6] In the language of the old psychology, the term *Imagination* has a much wider sense than that now commonly given to it. The name was applied to the (supposed) formative faculty of the soul, which gave form to the perceptions of which the sensation and reflection supplied the matter. After the manner of the times a certain objective reality was ascribed to it, and it was credited with most powerful influences over the physical and psychical states both of the owner and of others. It played a most important part in the operations of magic, witchcraft, fascination, and the like, and it is curious and interesting to note how through this mass of error pierce faint gleams of truths lately placed upon a scientific basis by modern researches in mental suggestion, hypnotism, and the like.

The Imagination received and conveyed its impressions with most efficacy through the eyes, and this Dante, with his love for scientific method, doubtless had in

mind in the passages of the present work referred to in the last note, and in many others.

The passages in question will be further illustrated by the following extract from Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, citing the great Neapolitan physician Giovanni Battista Porta: "This fascination . . . though it begin by touching or breathing, is alwaies accomplished and finished by the eie, as an extermination or expulsion of the spirits through the eies, approching to the hart of the bewitched, and infecting the same. . . . And the lightest and finest spirits, ascending into the highest parts of the head, doo fall into the eies, and so on from thence sent foorth, as being of all other parts of the bodie the most cleare, and fullest of veines and pores, and with the very spirit or vapor proceeding thence, is conueied out as it were by beames and streames a certeine fierie force."

[7] Compare post c. xii., note 2.

[8] Quoted by Aristotle Nic. Eth. vii., 1, from a translation of which Dante no doubt took the passage.

[9] For the ennobling influence of Dante's love for Beatrice, cp. post c. xi. To the present passage seem to refer the lines in which Beatrice, in the Earthly Paradise, describes her influence over her youthful lover:—

"These looks sometime upheld him; for I show'd
My youthful eyes, and led him by their light
In upward walking."

(*Purg.* xxx.—*Cary's Translation.*)

[10] Exemplar: i.e. the "book of memory" referred to in c. i., the original whence Dante drew his narrative.

[11] That is, which occupied a greater and more important place in the said "book of memory."

III.

[1] *Nel grande secolo.*

[2] *Mi pareva vedere.* It would be almost permissible to avoid the constant recurrence of the words "I seemed," "it appeared," and the like, by simply using the past tense of the verb which follows; as, "I saw," etc. In the extremely analytic state into which the vernacular Latin fell for some time before it passed into the Italian, it is common to find all the tenses formed with the aid of other verbs, used as auxiliaries: *volo*, *habeo*, *possum*, *videor*, etc.; e.g. *visus sum habere=habeo* (v. Fauriel, *Dante et les Origines de la Langue et de la Litérature Italiennes*, Vol. II. Sect. xiv.). A corresponding usage prevailed more or less in the early Italian.

[3] Cp. Paradise xv. 35. Toccar lo fondo
Della mia grazia e del mio Paradiso.
"I reached the profoundest depths of my grace and of my Paradise."

[4] An instance of the mystical import formerly attached to numbers, and especially of the personal significance which Dante ascribed to the number nine, of which we shall find many examples farther on. See especially c. xxx. n. 1.

[5] "*Makers.*" This old English word for a folk-poet is perhaps the aptest translation of *trovatori* (lit. "finders"), although these were not strictly popular poets. However, Dante, in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, distinguishes between the *trovatori* and the poets, in that the former merely aimed at the artless expression of their talents, while the latter rhymed in accordance with the rules of art. The word *Trovatore* is the same as the French *Trouveur* and Provençal *Troubadour*, though these three classes of rhymers differed more or less both in their mode of life and in the nature of their compositions.

[6] It was a frequent custom of the Troubadours to send to one another their compositions for criticism. Thus Aymeric de Penguillian sends to Sordello a Fabliau ending: "This envoi bears my Fabliau to the March, to Dom Sordello, that he may pass loyal judgment thereon, according to his wont."

For the replies to the present sonnet by various poets see the Introduction to the present volume, p. 57, sq.

[7] "He;" that is, Guido Cavalcanti. This "foremost friend" of Dante belonged to one of the noble houses of Florence, and was a son of that Cavalcante Cavalcanti whom Dante places in Hell among the holders of infidel dogmas; opinions which were shared by his son, according to some accounts, though it is probable that herein the latter was confused with his father. Guido was distinguished by all knightly and social accomplishments, though his high qualities were alloyed with a fastidious and haughty temper. He was of Ghibelline tendencies, and one of the most prominent of the Bianchi faction, and was exiled to Sarzana by the government of which Dante was a member, in their last desperate effort to preserve their country by banishing the heads of both the warring factions. He was allowed to return before long, but died of a fever contracted in his unhealthy place of exile (August, 1300). He was one of the foremost poets of his day, surpassing most of his contemporaries alike in artistic skill and in depth of thought. Like the rest, he treated of their eternal theme of love, but, following the traditions of Guido Guinicelli, of love in its symbolical and metaphysical aspects, although he wrote many lyrics, full of grace and music, in honour of his more earthly loves, which were various. He is said to have held in slight esteem the outward beauties of form and diction; if so, his practice was widely different from his theory. He was about fifteen years older than

Dante, whom he doubtless influenced in many ways; in politics, in the metaphysical treatment of love, and in the preference of the vernacular, of which he seems to have been the ardent champion (v. c. xxxi. post), going so far as even to depreciate Virgil himself (v. Inf. c. x.).

IV.

[1] Cp. ante c. ii.

[2] Love's tokens, i.e. pallor, trembling, etc. Cp. cc. ii., iii., xiv., xvi., xxiv., etc., etc.

V.

[1] The Virgin Mary, whom, as we are told, Beatrice held in especial honour (post c. xxix), as did Dante himself (Par. xxiii., xxxi., xxxii.), haply for the sake of her dead votaress.

VI.

[1] The *Sirventese* was one of the forms of poetry in vogue with the Troubadours. The literal meaning of the word is "service song," and this style of composition, like the rest, was originally used for amorous subjects; later on, however, it was usually devoted to satire. It is supposed to have suggested the ***terza rima.***

VII.

[1] Not written in the strict form to which the sonnet has been confined since the end of the 13th century. The older poets applied the term *Suono* or *Sonnetto* to

any short poem of from nine to eighteen, or even twenty lines ; generally, however, to compositions expressive of passion. Fra Guittone of Arezzo did much to give the Sonnet regular form, which may be deemed to have been finally determined by Dante himself. The following metrical translation of the present sonnet is nearly in the form of the original :—

O ye who on Love's way are journeying,
See, briefly tarrying,
If any sorrow like my sorrow be ;
Deign ye to list (it is mine only prayer),
And to declare
Am I not of all grief the inn and key.
Love, surely not for my slight worthiness,
But of his graciousness,
Once placed me in a life so sweet, so dear,
That oft concerning me the folk have said,
" How hath he merited
To bear within a heart so light of cheer ? "
But now, my courage, which from Love's own store
Was ever wont to draw its nourishment,
Being wholly gone and spent,
I am left so poor, I have no words therefor.
And thus it is that, fain to do as they
Who, for mere shame, disguise their penury,
I wear an outward show of jollity,
While in my heart I mourn, and waste away.

[2] *D'ogni dolor ostello.* The image is repeated in *Purg.* vi. 76. *Ohi serva Italia, di dolore ostello.* Petrarch frequently makes use of it, and so does Shakespeare, Ric. II., v. 1 :—

Thou most beauteous inn,
Why should hard favour'd grief be lodged in thee ?

[3] Lamentations i. 12. Quoted from the Vulgate, the translation according to our A.V. being : " Is it nothing,

to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

[4] I.e. the Sonnet was ostensibly the expression of Dante's regret at the departure of the lady with whom he was supposed to be enamoured, whereas in reality he meant to express his sorrow at losing the wonted means of disguising his love.

VIII.

[1] This, too, is rather a *Ballata*, than a Sonnet, strictly so called.

IX.

[1] The Pilgrims who constitute so common and so picturesque a feature of Middle Ages, would appear to have had a powerful fascination for Dante's imagination, cp. post c. xli. and note 2 thereon.

[2] "*Gave me of his own substance:*"—i.e. united himself with, entered into, made himself one with me.

[3] "*Took I into myself;*"—see last note.

X.

[1] In the *Inf.* c. ii. Virgil addresses Beatrice: "O Lady of Virtue." For the ennobling effect upon Dante of his love for Beatrice, cp. ante c. ii. and post c. xiii.; also, especially *Purg.* cc. xxx. and xxxi., *passim.*

XI.

[1] "*Spirit of Love,*" cp. note 5 to c. ii.

XII.

[1] This somewhat enigmatical saying may be interpreted as meaning that Love, in his essence, remains the same unmoved by the accidents which befall his votaries; though these, of whom Dante was one, are liable to be affected by all the vicissitudes of human fortunes. Dante probably had in his mind the definition of God attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, as "a circle whose centre is everywhere and his circumference nowhere."

[2] V. ante c. ii. and cp. Purg. c. xxx. "That lofty virtue, which had penetrated me, ere yet I had issued from my childhood."

[3] The English Ballad, and the French Ballade, though the same in name and in origin, each being, as the name implies, a song accompanied with the dance, differ in construction from each other, and from the Italian *Ballata*. The last is, properly, a lyric of two or more stanzas, or *strofetti*, in the first of which is set out the theme to be amplified in the following. Strictly speaking, the first stanza should be repeated at the end of each of the others. Dante, in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, assigns to the Ballata a place midway in dignity between the Canzone and the Sonnet.

[4] "*Pity's key:*"—cp. the Sonnet in c. vii. ante.

[5] I.e. in c. xxv., where he expounds and defends the poetical licence of using personifications of abstract ideas.

XIII.

[1] Cp. ante c. xi. n. 1.

[2] A maxim of the Schoolmen, and in accordance with the doctrines of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas,

who held, that the abstract conceptions upon which we bestow generic names, though not possessing substantive reality in themselves, are yet indicative of the real nature of things ; thus affecting a *via media* between the extremes of realism and nominalism.

[3] Cp. Purg. iv.

As one who standeth musing on his way,
His heart still journeying while his body lingers.

And Purg. ii. "As a man that goes, and knows not whither he cometh."

[4] These arguments, *pro* and *con*, as to the desirability of Love's lordship, are similar to the theses which were debated, with all form and solemnity, in the mediæval Courts of Love.

XIV.

[1] This wedding feast is supposd by many commentators to have been that of Beatrice herself, but as to this there is no evidence one way or the other.

[2] Cp. ante cc. ii. and iii. and post xvi., xxiv., etc. At his meeting in the next world with the glorified Beatrice, Dante again experiences the tremors which had been wont to assail him when in her presence : v. Purg. xxx. : "And my spirit, which had now abode so long since it had been amated in her presence, trembling and faint, without the eyes' intelligence, but by the occult virtue which moved from her, felt the old love's mighty power." And a few lines farther on :—"Less than a drachm of blood is left me which trembles not ; I perceive the traces of the old love."

[3] That is to say, his whole vital functions were concentrated into his gaze, to the exclusion of all the other faculties.

[4] Cp. note 10 to c. xix. post.

[5] I.e. that *trasfigurazione*, or altered demeanour, pallor, trembling, etc., of which he so often speaks as coming over him at the sight of Beatrice.

[6] "He," i.e. Love.

[7] "*Chamber of tears*," v. ante c. xii.

XV.

[1] *Trasfigurazione*, i.e. the changes before mentioned as having been wrought in his face by emotion.

[2] That is, his altered features would move pity in others, were it not that such pity was checked by the ridicule of Beatrice and the other ladies.

XVI.

[1] *Oscura qualità*:—the same as the *trasfigurazione* before mentioned.

[2] Cp. note 2 to c. xiv.

XIX.

[1] Cp. Purg. xxiv. 52 sqq. "Such an one am I, that when Love inspires, I write; and even as he dictates within, so do I testify."

[2] The Canzone was one of the poetical forms cultivated by the Troubadours; though the compositions of theirs which pass under this name are of much slighter nature than the majestic Canzoni of Dante and Petrarch. This grander style is said to have been the creation of Dante's friend Lapo Gianni, and their contemporary Gianni Alfani, (Trucchi *Poesie Italiane Inedite* Introd. sec. 68), though

this assertion would seem unjust to the claims of the Sicilian *Trovatore* Jacopo da Lentino. Despite its name (*Cantio*), it is said that the Canzone was never set to music ; see Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, c. II. 3, where he terms it "the completed action of him who composed the harmonious words." Hence he sets it above all other modes of lyric poetry in dignity, and declares it eminently fitted for the treatment of ethical and philosophic subjects.

[3] This Canzone was apparently a favourite of Dante, for he makes Buonaggiunta da Lucca greet him in Purgatory as its author, and hail him as the creator of that "sweet, new style" to which earlier bards had failed to attain. Purg. xxiv.

[4] *Ma ragionar per isfogar la mente.* Cp. Hamlet II. ii. "Unpack my heart with words."

[5] I.e. not to pitch his song in so high a key that he would become dismayed by the greatness of his undertaking.

[6] Cp. the passage from Jacopo da Lentino quoted in note 9 to the Introduction.

[7] An indication that Dante's great poem was already foreshadowed in his mind, though not, certainly, in the form which it eventually assumed, and, at the same time, an instance of the symmetry with which Dante's intellectual self expanded, and of the unity which prevailed through all the periods of his mental life.

[8] Cp. ante c. xi.

[9] "Fair, not pale." From c. xxxvii. we learn that Beatrice's tint was of a pale hue, "like that of Love." This is the only definite particular we have respecting her personal appearance.

[10] Cp. the *Convito*, III. viii. "In the countenance there are two places wherein the soul hath most especial efficiency (seeing that in these two places all the three

natures of the soul have jurisdiction, that is to say, in the eyes and in the mouth), and which she most especially adorns and bestows all her care to render beautiful. And in these two places, I say that all those delights appear when I say 'in her eyes and in her sweet smile;' which two places, by a fair similitude, may be called *the balconies of the lady who inhabits the mansion of the body, the soul, that is;* for here, though veiled, as it were, she is wont ofttimes to show herself. She showeth herself in the eyes so plainly, that her present passion may be read by any who regardeth well. . . . And what is laughter if not *a coruscation of the soul's delight;* a light, that is, which appeareth without, according as it is within?"

The eyes and the smile never lost their fascination for Dante. The eyes of Beatrice are commemorated in countless passages of the *Commedia*, and the smile of her, of his guide, and of the saints in Paradise constantly recurs, expressive of love, encouragement, approbation, and even of playful chiding.

XX.

[1] Cp. Guido Guinicelli :—

Al cor gentil ripara sempre amore,
Come l'augel in selva alla verdura,
Nè fe amor anziche gentil core,
Nè gentil core anziche amor, Natura.

"Love aye repairs to the gentle heart, even as the bird in woodland to the green brake; nor did Nature make love before the gentle heart, nor the gentle heart before love."

[2] "*The Sage*," i.e. Guido Guinicelli, of Bologna, descended from one of the noblest families there. He was one of the earliest of the Italian poets to employ the

forms of love poetry cultivated by the Troubadours in the treatment of moral and philosophical subjects. He was probably the greatest of Dante's predecessors, and exercised great influence over him. He was a notary by profession, like so many of the poets of his day. He was an ardent Ghibelline, and was driven into exile upon the fall of that party in his native place. He died 1276-7.

[3] Cp. *Purg.* xxv. 64, where he says, in condemnation of Averrhoes, "He divorced from the soul the possible reason."

[4] The same idea is expanded in the *Purg.* xviii. 19, sqq.: "The soul, created prompt to love, is apt to turn towards whatso pleaseth it, so soon as it is roused into action by pleasure. Your apprehension derives from the actual being intention, and so develops it within you as to make the soul turn towards it. And if, thus turned, the soul incline towards it, this inclination is Love."

This is in accordance with the psychology of St. Thomas Aquinas, who affirms that the Will is moved by the Intellect *per modum finis;* i.e. by the Intellect setting before it some end as desirable. The Apprehension is defined by him as the combination of the Sensitive and Intellective faculties.

[5] In the Aristotelian philosophy, adopted by the Schoolmen, matter (ὕλη, τὸ ὑποκείμενον) of itself was regarded as existing "potentially" merely, being *actualised* by the accession of *form* (εἶδος), or that individualizing and vivifying principle which made it actually existent (ὄντως ὄν).

XXI.

[1] Cp. *Parad.* xxviii. :—

"The beauteous eyes whence love
Had made the leash to take me."

(*Cary's Translation.*)

So in *Purg.* xxxi. 116, Beatrice's eyes are called "the emeralds, from which love formerly drew his arms against thee."

It is probable that in these passages, and others, Dante means more than that he was enslaved by the beauty of Beatrice's eyes. He refers, most likely, to the belief current in his own day, and long afterwards, that the passions of the soul—Love, Hate, Envy, Malevolence, etc.—could be conveyed from one person to another by means of the "spirits," which chiefly held intercommunion through the most sensitive part of the body, the eyes. (See notes 5 and 6 to c. ii., ante.) This belief, which was handed down from classical antiquity, has always prevailed, and still prevails, in the East; it was much dwelt upon by the mystico-physical School of Paracelsus and the Alchemists, and still survives in that farrago of worn-out superstitions, modern Theosophy.

[2] Cp. note 10 to c. xix.

XXII.

[1] *Andar senza atto vile.* And again, a little further on, the ladies are said to be *quasi ingentilite* by Beatrice's presence. Cp. an early anonymous Sicilian poet: *Allo splendor di sua ricca bontade Ciascuna donna e donzella s'aggenza.* "By the splendour of her rich beauty each dame and damsel becomes more noble." And cp. ante c. xix., and post c. xxvii.

XXIII.

[1] Another instance of the mystical import of the number Nine in connection with Beatrice. See especially post c. xxx.

[2] In his account of this vision Dante has followed St. Matthew's Gospel, xxiv. 29, sqq.; Isaiah xiii. 10; Ezekiel xxxii. 7.

[3] So in the Purgatory xxix. 20, 31, the approach of the glorified Beatrice was preceded by songs of "*Hosannah.*"

[4] So in the *Commedia* Dante says: "In Him is our peace."

[5] Cp. the second Sonnet in c. viii.

[6] I.e. the pallor to which he so often refers.

[7] *Rain of manna.* Probably a reminiscence of the classical authors, who represent the gods as leaving a fragrance behind them on their departure.

[8] I.e. death.

[9] Cp. the conclusion of the second sonnet in c. viii., written upon the death of the young lady, Beatrice's friend.

XXIV.

[1] So in *Purg.* xxiv. 51. "Such an one am I, that I write when Love inspires me, and even as he dictates within, so do I testify." And cp. ante c. xix.

[2] That Monna Vanna, or Giovanna, the love of Guido Cavalcanti, to whom Dante refers in that most exquisite sonnet, *Guido vorrei che tu, e Lapo, ed io*, of which the following translation gives the sense, though nothing more:—

Guido, I would that Lapo, thou and I
Were rapt away by wizard's gramarye,
And set upon a bark, which o'er the sea,
At our good will, before each wind should fly;
That so from every hurt, which cruelty
Of time or fortune brings, we might be free,
Growing each day more wishful, I and ye,

For ever one with other to abye :
And our kind necromaunt should thither bring
Thy Monna Vanna, Monna Bice, too,
With her who in my lay* the thirtieth is ;
Then—love the theme of all our reasoning,—
Each one should be content, the ages through,
To dwell with us, as we with them, I wis.

[3] Cp. the sonnet in c. viii., where Beatrice, bending over the body of her dead friend, is described as "Love in his proper form."

[4] A gentle rebuke of his friend's fickleness, Guido being a man of many loves, which we learn as well from other sources as from his own confessions and the poetical reproofs of his brother bards ; who, indeed, for the most part, were not much better in this respect than he.

[5] *The wonted tremor.* Cp. the passage from the Purg. xxx. already quoted.

XXV.

[1] In the Aristotelian philosophy, that is termed a substance which is not predicated of anything else, but of which other things are predicated : again, that which constitutes the very essence of a thing. (Arist. Metaph. IV. c. 8). An accident is something which is actually inherent in a thing, but not necessarily so. (Ib. c. 30.)

[2] I.e. Aristotle.

[3] In this chapter we have an anticipation of Dante's philological and critical treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*,

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* I.e. the Sirventese already spoken of, in which Dante sang the praises of sixty of the fairest ladies of Florence.

the earliest work on the like subjects in the Italian—probably in any modern language. In that work, several of the points briefly touched upon here are farther expanded.

[4] The Romance languages, that is, as distinguished from the Latin, which was still cultivated for all literary purposes.

[5] I.e. it might have been customary with other nations to compose poetry in their spoken language.

[6] The most prominent distinction in form between the classical and vernacular poetry is that the latter generally rhymes, and is constructed with especial reference to the exigencies and effects of rhyme ; while in the former the syllabic measure wholly determines the character of the verse. Dante touches upon the distinction between the modern rhymes, and the verses constructed after the strict rules of poetic art, in the *De Vulg. El.*

[7] The three main divisions of the Romance family of languages were distinguished by the affirmative particle used by each. In Northern French the word *yes* was expressed by *Oil*, in Provençal (including most of Southern France and part of Northern Spain) by *Oc*, in Italy by *Si*, so in the *Commedia* Dante distinguishes the Bolognese territory as "the land where *sipa* ('yes') is pronounced."

[8] This limitation of the time during which the vernacular poetry had been cultivated, is probably fairly accurate as applied to the *Lingua di Si.* The *Lingua d'Oco*, however, had been cultivated for poetical purposes for a much longer period. Count William IX. of Poictiers (fl. 1087-1127) has left some poetical remains dating from the end of the eleventh century, which have by no means the appearance of first tentative essays, while we know that there were many Troubadours his contemporaries. Even as applied to the *Lingua di Si*, Dante's

statement must be confined to the *Kunstlied*, for we can hardly doubt that rude songs and ballads had long ere that date existed among the people, which, however different from the Italian with which we are acquainted, must have been more closely akin thereto than to even the most corrupt Latin.

[9] With increased experience, Dante came to take wider views of the capabilities of his native tongue. Here he speaks of it as adapted to love-poetry only. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* he speaks of tragic, comic and elegiac subjects, and especially commends the Canzone as fitted to treat of philosophy and morals; in the *Convito*, both verse and prose, he discourses in Italian not upon love alone, but upon science, literature, and morals; while he pours into the *Commedia* the quintessence of all the thought and learning of his day.

[10] Characteristic of Dante, who never indulges in the melody of language or the play of fancy for its own sake, but always for the more perfect expression or illustration of his idea.

XXVI.

[1] For the ennobling influence of Beatrice's very aspect upon all observers cp. cc. xix., xxi., and xxii. ante, etc., xxvii. post. Cp. too Guido Cavalcanti: "If Love honoureth a lady so exalted as is my blessed one, no wonder is it, to whoso observeth well, considering her benignity. . . . In her is angelic beauty resplendent, with so great a grace that every man who regards her bends down his visage." So the anonymous early Sicilian poet. See the passages quoted in the Introduction, p. 31.

XXVII.

[1] Cp. c. xxi. ante.

XXVIII.

[1] *E si e cosa umil, che non si crede.* Cp. note 4 to c. ii. ante. Dante himself confesses, and his biographers corroborate him, that his besetting sin was pride; but none, not Thomas à Kempis himself, feels, and makes others feel, more deeply, how there is no exaltation of spirit to equal that which springs from the most self-obliterating humility in the presence of that which is truly lofty.

XXIX.

Lamentations i. 1. Again Dante quoted these words, after many years, when he began with them the epistle which he addressed to the Italian Cardinals upon the death of Clement V. (1314), exhorting them to elect an Italian pope, who should bring back the Holy See to Rome, and thus put an end to the bereavement of Christendom. Not without significance is it that Dante should quote the same words, to express his own personal bereavement, and his bereavement as one of the Christian church.

[2] Cp. Paradise xxxi. and xxxii., where Beatrice's place in Heaven is close to that of the Virgin, of whom she had been an especial votaress. See c. v. ante.

[3] The design of the book, as declared in the Proem, is only to deal with such matters as fall under the rubric *Incipit vita nova* in the "book of memory."

[4] Dante again speaks in condemnation of self-praise

in the *Convito*, I. ii., where, at the same time, he declares under what exceptional circumstances it is permissible; namely, where by so doing one may instruct others, or may clear oneself from calumny.

XXX.

[1] The belief in a mystical virtue inherent in numbers was imported into European philosophy by Pythagoras, long before whose time it had existed in the East. Plato was in this respect a disciple of Pythagoras, and the significance of numbers was a prime article of the Neo-Platonists, and of the New Pythagoreans, who imbibed many of their doctrines. The Arab philosophers introduced them into the scholastic philosophy, with so many other of the Neo-Platonic theories.

Dante was a strong adherent of this doctrine, as appears by the *Commedia*, which is wholly constructed upon a strict numerical plan, in which the numbers three, nine and ten predominate.

[2] Ten was called the perfect number, as comprising all numbers in itself, all other numbers being formed from those of the first decade by addition or multiplication.

[3] According to the Ptolemaic astronomy, which was accepted in the Middle Age, the earth was the centre of the system, and about it revolved the nine concentric movable heavens. These were the heavens of the seven planets—Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Sun, Jupiter and Saturn—the heaven of fixed stars, and the crystalline heaven, or *primum mobile*, which communicated its motion to all the rest, itself being moved by the tenth, fixed, or empyreal heaven, which, itself unmoved, moved all, "as being loved" (see ante note 1 to c. ii.). In the

Christian system, this tenth heaven was made the more especial abode of the Trinity.

Dante sets out this system in full in the *Convito* II. iv., and adheres to it in the celestial geography, so to speak, of the *Paradiso.*

[4] The belief in the influence of the various planetary conjunctions upon human destinies, almost universal in Dante's day, was fully shared by him, and is alluded to in many passages of his works. Thus in *Purg.* xxx. 110, "by operation of the great spheres, which direct every seed to some end, according as the stars are in conjunction."

XXXI.

[1] Guido Cavalcanti, who, as we have already seen, was so staunch a partisan of the vernacular as to fail in the due appreciation of Virgil, his friend's idol, and that of the Middle Age. By his aid in determining Dante's inclination towards the vernacular, he has merited the undying gratitude of posterity.

XXXII.

[1] I.e. his eyes were so exhausted with weeping, that his grief could no longer find a vent thereat.

[2] See the canzone in c. xix., Donne che avete intellello d'amore.

[3] See the passage in the canzone just referred to, which explains both this and what precedes:—"Her great goodness," etc.

XXXIII.

[1] Another instance of that curious blending of passion and reflection for which Dante is so remarkable.

XXXIV.

[1] The word in the original is *Servitore*, which may be literally translated, in conformity with the old English use of the word "servant," as the correlative of "mistress," common in our poets and dramatists. So Shakspere :—"Sir Valentine and servant." Two Gentlemen of Verona, II. i.

XXXV.

[1] At her first apparition, Beatrice's form had struck Dante as being that of an angel (c. ii. ante), and now, of all times, would this be the form under which he would attempt to draw her. Of Dante's recorded talent for drawing, mention has been made in the Introduction (p. 69). This present chapter, besides its own inimitable beauty and pathos, is further memorable as being the occasion of Browning's lines in the dedication of his "Men and Women" to his wife, entitled, "One Word More," wherein the "certain people of importance" who interrupted the work, are treated with far less reverence than that which Dante paid them.

[2] Dante, it is said, was very subject to abstraction, or absence of mind. According to a well-known anecdote, he was once before a shop in the great square of Siena, where, taking up a book in which he was interested, he became so absorbed that he stood there for some hours, reading, and unconscious alike of the lapse of time, and of all his surroundings, although, while he was standing there, public sports and games had been going forward in the square before him, of which he knew nothing. Many incidental allusions in his works apparently confirm this alleged tendency to abstraction. Cp. c. xl. post ; *Purgatorio* ii. 17 ; iv. 9 ; v. 1, 9 ; xii. 75 ; *Paradiso* xxi. 3.

[3] *Someone was with me just now*, i.e. *Quella Beatrice beta, che vive in cielo con gli angeli, e in terra colla mia*

anima. "That Beatrice, blessing and blest, who liveth in Heaven with the angels, and on earth with my soul."

[4] Cp. *Inf.* ii., and *Parad.* xxxi. and xxxii. "Heaven of *Humility*." Cp. note 4 to c. ii. and note 1 to c. xxviii.

XXXVII.

[1] The pallor before referred to. Cp. Purg. xix. 14, "With love's own hue illumed." (Cary's trans.)

XL.

[1] The ninth hour of the day; counting from six a.m., one of the canonical hours of prayer. Another allusion to the mystical number.

[2] It was in this "most noble colour" that the *angiola giovanissima* first appeared to him, v. c. ii.

[3] A fanciful comparison of the circles about his eyes, the result of grief, to the nimbus about the heads of martyrs in pictures.

XLI.

[1] Cp. *Paradiso* xxxi. 103 :—

So he, who, haply from Croatia far,
Journeys our Veronica to behold,—
The ancient rede ne'er sating his desire,—
E'en while 'tis shown him, says within his thought,
"O Jesu Christ, my Lord, O, very God,
Was then thy semblance formèd even thus?"

According to the legend, St. Veronica was the daughter of Salome, sister of Herod. Her earlier life had been given up to worldliness and vanity, but upon witnessing the passion of Christ, she was moved to awe and compassion, and was converted. As He was toiling under the weight of the cross, she gave Him her handkerchief to wipe His face, which left its impress upon it. Veronica now became a Christian, and effected many

miraculous cures by means of the handkerchief, the fame of which became so spread abroad, that she was sent for to Rome to cure Tiberius, then in his last sickness; but he died before she could reach him. Being in Rome, she associated herself with St. Peter and St. Paul, and, as some say, suffered martyrdom under them; others say that she went with St. Mary Magdalene and Lazarus on their mission to the South of France, and was martyred there. The sacred handkerchief, with our Lord's likeness still upon it, was left in a chapel of St. Peter's, in Rome, and was exhibited thrice in the year; namely, in the middle of January, in Holy Week, and on Ascension Day. It was one of the chief attractions to pilgrims from all parts of Christendom.

[2] Pilgrims were a favourite subject of allusion and simile with Dante. Cp. *Purg.* viii. 4; xxiii. 16; xxvii. 100; xxxiii. 78; *Parad.* xxxi. 103. V. also c. ix. ante and note 2 thereon.

[3] I.e. at Compostello in Galicia, in Spain, the shrine and sepulchre of St. James the Greater. According to his legend, after his martyrdom, his disciples took his body, and placed it in a ship; which was guided by angels, while the disciples slept, through the pillars of Hercules and out into the ocean, until it grounded on the coast of Galicia. The disciples then took the saint's body out of the ship, and laid it upon a rock, into which it sank, as though the stone had been some soft substance, and became embedded, which was a sign that this was the allotted resting-place of the saint. But the queen of the place, who was a most cruel pagan, caused a yoke of wild bulls to be harnessed to the rock, that they might drag it away, and thus the saint's body be destroyed. But the bulls immediately became tame, and drew the body quietly into the palace, whereupon the queen became converted with all her people, and gave the saint a splendid sepulture. His resting-place afterwards became for-

gotten, until, about the year 800, his body was discovered, and removed to Compostello, which soon became one of the most frequented shrines in Christendom. St. James showed his gratitude by taking the Spanish nation under his special protection, appearing *in propria persona* on several occasions, in stress of battle with the Moors, to secure the victory to the Christian arms. The famous knightly order of Santiago was founded to protect the pilgrims visiting the shrine at Compostello from the attacks of Moors and robbers.

[4] The etymology here is somewhat doubtful.

XLII.

[1] Dimly, that is, in the glass of the intuitive imagination, and not face to face, with the eyes of reason.

[2] Otherwise called "Book I., the Less," in c. 2 of which is this passage: "For even as are the eyes of bats to the radiance which follows daybreak, so is the thought of our soul to those things which, of their nature, are radiant above all."

[3] I.e., the *primum mobile*, or crystalline sphere, the ninth and outermost of the movable heavens. V. ante note 3 to c. xxx. Thus, "beyond this sphere," would be the tenth or empyreal heaven, the mansion of God and His saints. So Thomas Aquinas and others of the schoolmen.

XLIII.

[1] *Benedetta Beatrice.* V. ante c. ii. n. 2, and cp. *Convito* II. ii. *Quella Beatrice beata, che vive in cielo con gli angeli, e in terra colla mia anima.*

[2] I.e., "Who is blessed throughout all ages."

THE END.

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